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AARON HILL

POET, DRAMATIST, PROJECTOR

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AARON HILL ESQ.

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POET, DRAMATIST, PROJECTOR

BY

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, IN THE
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A. H. THORNDIKE,
Secretary.

TO THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER

PREFACE

The study of a minor author entails two main advantages: his relations with great contemporaries may throw light upon them from a new angle; and his activities, whether significant or not in their results, may illustrate the spirit of his age, and enrich the backgrounds of more memorable lives. There is often, too, a psychological problem of much interest involved in a vanished reputation. Why was a writer, whose works our age declines to notice, highly regarded in his own day? It is a problem merely pushed aside, not solved, by concluding that the judgment of our ancestors was at fault. The attempt to solve it may not always result in a contribution to scholarship, but it may add a very little to our knowledge of human nature, and it sometimes reveals a personality more interesting and attractive than the pages in which that personality found expression.

Aaron Hill is an author who offers all these inducements to study: he had relations more or less intimate with a great poet and a great novelist, and with many less famous writers; he was versatile and enterprising to such an unusual degree that he left few of the typical pursuits of his time untried; and the prominence of his name in his own day, compared with the total eclipse of it in ours, provides us with the psychological problem. "To the really intelligent men among his contemporaries," Professor Lounsbury has said, "he must have seemed the most persistent and colossal bore of the century."¹ To disinter an extinct

¹ Thomas R. Lounsbury, *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, 87. "It was to posterity," Professor Lounsbury says of Hill in another place (page 151), "that he looked for recognition, forgetting that posterity must

bore of the past would be a work not so much of pious as of impious pedantry—a criminal attempt to increase the present sum of boredom. But it is curious that men, usually considered to have been really intelligent, expressed opinions the reverse of that which Professor Lounsbury supposes them to have entertained. By some of them Hill was called a genius, by many a man of unusual ability; and almost invariably he was spoken of with great respect. Were all these men either deliberately insincere, or stupidly mistaken?

This study makes no effort to rescue Hill's poetry from the neglect into which it has deservedly fallen. But in following his career, we meet well-known figures, we catch glimpses of interesting phases of eighteenth century thought and enterprise, and we come to know a man who has no title to be hailed as a genius, but who is, nevertheless, very far from deserving to be dismissed as a “bore of the first water,”² or as a “joke concocted between the Muses and Momus, to bring the judgments of mortals into contempt.”³

In the unpublished correspondence between Hill and Samuel Richardson, preserved in the Forster MSS. in the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington, I have found the most interesting record of Hill's later life; and I am therefore especially indebted to the Keeper of the Dyce and Forster Collections for the privilege of examining this material. In quoting from the correspondence, I have retained the original spelling and punctuation; but in extracts from printed works, I have modernized both, for I see no advantage in directing attention to Hill's vagaries necessarily be so taken up with its own bores that only at rare intervals can a pious pedantry be trusted to exhume even temporarily the extinet bores of the past.”

² As he is characterized in the *Dict. of Nat. Biog.*

³ D. C. Tovey, Memoir of Thomson in the Aldine ed. of his works, 1897, p. xxiii.

in the use of commas and italics. I wish to express my thanks for courteous assistance to the librarians of Yale, Harvard, and Columbia Universities; to the authorities of the British Museum, the John Rylands Library of Manchester, and the Bodleian; and to Professor C. H. Firth of Oxford University, through whose kindness I secured reading privileges at the Bodleian. My friend Miss E. R. Clapp examined for me several books to which I did not have access, and made helpful suggestions; and my mother has been a most patient and valuable critic of my work in all its stages.

In the English Department at Columbia University, my thanks are due to Professor A. H. Thorndike and Dr. Carl Van Doren for reading my manuscript. But my deepest obligation is to Professor W. P. Trent, who first suggested the subject of this study, and whose generous interest in its progress has been no less helpful to me than his wide and intimate knowledge of the period. It is a pleasure to express here my appreciation of both.

NEW YORK CITY, May, 1913.

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AARON HILL

CHAPTER I

HILL'S EARLY LIFE

Aaron Hill was born on February 10, 1685, in Beaufort Buildings in the Strand.¹ His father was George Hill, an attorney, of Malmesbury Abbey, in Wiltshire, "a gentleman possessed of an estate of about 2000 l. a year, which was entailed upon him, and the eldest son, and to his heirs for many descents. But the unhappy misconduct of Mr. George Hill, and the weakness of the trustees, entangled it in such a manner as hitherto has rendered it of no advantage to his family; for, without any legal title so to do, he sold it all at different times for sums greatly beneath the value of it, and left his children to their mother's care, and her mother's (Mrs. Ann Gregory), who took great pains with her grandson's education."² Perhaps it was his father's misuse of his legal knowledge that led Aaron Hill to acquire what one of his biographers calls a "deep insight" into law—so deep that his arguments sometimes obliged "the greatest council (formally) under their hands to retract their own first given opinions."³ It was not deep enough to enable him to win a law-suit, however. Another son of George Hill, Gilbert, appears from time to time during his brother Aaron's life and after his death, usually in a state of distress.

¹ For biographies of Hill, see the Bibliography.

² Cibber's *Lives*, V, 252 f.

³ *Ibid.*, V, 261.

At the age of nine, Aaron Hill was sent to the free grammar-school at Barnstaple in Devon, where he had for a schoolfellow John Gay, also born in 1685. From Barnstaple he went to Westminster, just a little too late to come under the rod of the famous Dr. Busby, who died in 1695. There were two classes of students at Westminster: Town Boys, and King's (or Queen's) Scholars, elected after a year from among the Town Boys. Hill evidently remained a Town Boy, for his name does not appear in the list of those elected to the Foundation. His friendship with Barton Booth, the actor, who entered the school about 1690 and left in 1698 to go on the Dublin stage, probably began at Westminster; and perhaps his interest in the stage was first aroused, like Booth's, by the annual Westminster play. Another Westminster boy, afterwards famous,—John Carteret, Earl of Granville,—was referred to by Hill as a schoolfellow;⁴ but he must have entered just about when Hill left, for he was five years his junior. Hill eulogized him in his poem, *The Impartial* (1745), but confided to his friend Richardson that he really was not sure that what he said of him was true.⁵

At Westminster Hill received the usual classical education of the time.⁶ One little contemporary picture of conditions in the school is perhaps worth quoting. The mother of a Westminster boy, Colin Campbell, wrote in February, 1691: "Colin is a busie man at all his lessons; is every day at scoul all this winter befor 7 o'clock, and his wax candle with him, and doth not com out till past 11, and they returne at 1, and stay until neir six. This was far

⁴ In the dedication of *The Impartial* to Carteret by "his Lordship's quondam schoolfellow."

⁵ Hill to Richardson, April 6 and 9, 1744. Forster MSS.

⁶ See G. F. Russell Barker, *Memoir of Richard Busby*, etc., London, 1895, and John Sargeaunt, *Annals of Westminster School*, London, 1898.

from his dyot at hom, and in the great cold scoul he sits the whole day over without a hatt or cap, and all the windows broak, and yet thanks be to God, he taks very well with it, tho he never seeth a fire but in my hous.'⁷ She notes, however, that the reputation of the masters for severity has not been borne out so far in Colin's case. Hill, too, unless the boy was very different from the man, was probably a "busie man at his lessons," and tradition says that he was a "busie man" at the lessons of his fellows as well: "Under the care of Dr. Knipe, his genius showed itself in a distinguished light, and often made him some amends for his hard fortune, which denied him such supplies of pocket money as his spirit wished, by enabling him to perform the tasks of many who had not his capacity."⁸ It is more likely that his helpfulness was prompted by good-nature, and by the inadequacy of his own tasks to employ all his energy; if he really increased his pocket money by his genius, it was, I think, the only instance of the kind in his life. Aside from this anecdote, there is little to show what sort of boy he was, except one reminiscence of his own, which suggests that he was imaginative and sensitive to impressions: in his *Plain Dealer*,⁹ after praising Spenser for bold descriptions and quick, penetrating fancy, he goes on: "There is in his works an image of Death so dreadfully drawn, and painted in such glowing colors, that (having got it by heart when I was a boy) it made so lively an impression on me that I never failed for a long time after to see it at my bed's foot as soon as the candle was carried out of the room, and met it in every churchyard I passed over after sunset."¹⁰

⁷ Quoted by Sargeaunt, *Annals*, etc., 287.

⁸ Cibber's *Lives*, V, 253. Dr. Thomas Knipe was Busby's successor.

⁹ No. 91.

¹⁰ Hill's appreciation of earlier poets occasionally took a form that

The conventional Westminster boy proceeded in due course either to Christ Church, Oxford, or Trinity College, Cambridge; but Hill was not the conventional boy. "At fourteen years of age he left Westminster school; and shortly after, hearing his grandmother make mention of a relation much esteemed (Lord Paget, then ambassador at Constantinople), he formed a resolution of paying him a visit there, being likewise very desirous of seeing that empire."¹¹ Mrs. Gregory, being a woman of "uncommon understanding and great good-nature," sympathized with this adventurous scheme, and furnished him with funds for the voyage. He embarked on March 2, 1700, and travelled by way of Portugal and Italy. Unfortunately, the diary he is said to have kept has not come to light, but many particulars of the journey were incorporated in his *Ottoman Empire*. Lord Paget was surprised at the arrival of his young relation, and it is a proof of the attractions of Hill's person and character that he was also pleased at the boy's enterprise. He promptly provided for him "a very learned ecclesiastic in his own house, and under his tuition sent him to travel, being desirous to improve, so far as possible, the education of a person he found worthy of it." These travels took Hill to Greece, and the islands of the Ægean, and by caravan into the Holy

arouses the ire of their modern admirers, though it was quite in accord with the feeling of his own age. He "improved" poems of Wotton and Donne. (See *The Disparity, from a Hint of Sir Henry Wotton, Works*, III, 310; and *To a Lady who Loved Angling, from a Hint out of Dr. Donne, Works*, IV, 58.) In the very brief notice of Hill in *The Cambridge History of Eng. Lit.*, IX, ch. VI, p. 210, the alteration of Wotton's "You meaner beauties of the night" is singled out by Professor Saintsbury as a crime he finds it very difficult to pardon Hill for.

¹¹ Life by "I. K." prefixed to Hill's *Dramatic Works*.

Land;¹² he visited Mecca as well as Jerusalem. He was in Egypt in the spring of 1701, and back in Constantinople in 1702. Needless to say, he had adventures, and the most interesting parts of his *Ottoman Empire* are those in which he tells of them, though he introduces them merely by way of illustration.

Once, when Hill and others were returning from a visit to a British ship, they met a Turkish fanatic, "a certain tattered wretch, in the habit of a pilgrim, leaping up and down, with elevated eyes, contracted forehead, and a visage full of passion and deformity. (He) held a dagger in his hand, and skipped about with such . . . violence as made me take his zealous transports for madness; so that taking him for some simple antic, I laughed aloud at his extravagant diversion. He saw me laugh and made directly towards me with his brandished weapon, which a Greek interpreter, endeavoring to turn aside, received unhappily to the hilt within his bosom." He then hurled his dagger at Hill, who avoided it by dropping to his knee. Of course Hill killed him.¹³

At Sestos and Abydos, Hill paid his respects to the lovers; and after quoting Musæus, he adds with a trace of humor that the sentimental traveller has opportunity enough to weep, for Turkish official red-tape detains him there three days. At Troy he was sure that he had found a fragment of the original wall and the tomb of Hector. His vessel was detained near the coast by adverse winds long enough to permit him to land, with an Italian priest,

¹² " 'Tis really a diverting entertainment for a sprightly fancy to observe what multitudes of superstitious Jews swarm up and down in every caravan; the oldest, ugliest, and most decrepit of all mankind, who flock from every distant corner of the spacious universe to die as near Jerusalem as possible, and load themselves and other beasts of burden with the musty bones and tattered reliques of their dead relations" (*Ottoman Empire*, 274).

¹³ *Ottoman Empire*, 82 f.

and they walked about three miles up into a desolate country overgrown with brambles. At least one Englishman had been there before them, for scratched on the marble of the supposed tomb of Hector were the lines:

“I do suppose that here stood Troy;
My name it is William, a jolly Boy;
My other name it is Hudson, and so
God bless the sailors, wherever they do go.

I was here in the year of our Lord 1631, and was bound for old England, God bless her.”¹⁴

At Samos, Hill watched the sponge divers, and tried diving himself with their apparatus, though “more than most men averse to diving.”¹⁵ At Patmos, he was determined to see the chapel where St. John was said to have written the Book of Revelations; and unable to persuade anyone to go on shore with him, he landed alone, and started out with pistols and scimetar to find the monastery. While wandering about, quite lost, on a wooded hill, he discovered “on the brow of an impending precipice a little hut or cave,” with a door which he pushed open. “I was all amazed when I perceived the inside of the cell as still as possible; . . . just against the entrance burned a lamp on either side a little altar, and the weak and broken light . . . discovered in the midst a large black coffin filled with something . . . as black and dismal . . . as the coffin.” This dismal something was a living Italian hermit, who proved to be a most agreeable companion, and escorted the young traveller to the monastery.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ottoman Empire*, 206 f.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 210–211. He and his fellow travellers were induced to try their skill when they heard of a law among the divers “that no man shall be allowed to marry, till he can demonstrate by a trial he is qualified to dive for one continued quarter of an hour.” Hill kept his head under only two minutes.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 213 f.

Hill's pictures of the streets of Cairo—especially of a bowing ass, a climbing goat, and a dancing camel—are entertaining.¹⁷ But his most thrilling adventure happened in the catacombs, some fifteen miles southeast of Memphis. To visit them was a dangerous enterprise, for they were remote from protection, and the wandering Arabs had an unpleasant custom of closing the entrances after travellers had entered, and then returning "some few days after to divide the plunder of those miscarried gentlemen." Hill and three others secured a guide, journeyed all night, and found the desert apparently deserted. Near the opening of the catacombs, however, they were surprised to see a ladder of ropes. They "went backwards down, with each man a pistol in one hand and a lighted torch in the other. A strange uncommon smell saluted our first entrance with an odor not to be imagined by such as have not known it by experience, and the blazing torches, striking a faint glimmering light through the thickness of the gloom, discovered, as we walked along, on either side the discolored faces of the dead, with a strange and inexpressible horror. We had scarce passed three yards within the vault when the fore-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 242 f. Hill did not rest till he found out how they taught the camels to dance: "They make a large square hollow place on some stone pavement, not unlike a bath, of such depth that nothing let down thither can get out again but with the same assistance he was first put in by. Under this paved floor, consisting . . . of . . . fire-stone, is built a furnace into which they put a necessary quantity of wood, and heating it to what degree they please, the stones grow hot like some mild oven. Then they put the poor meek camel into this square hollow, heated as it is, and standing around the edges of the place begin to sound their drums or other instruments; continuing so to do, while the unhoofed and tender-footed camel, all impatient of the heat, first draws up one leg, then another, changing swifter as the heat, increasing, burns his feet with greater anguish, till at last he rears himself on end, and capers nimbly on his hinder feet, as if he strove to imitate a dancer." After a course of this training, he is ready to dance anywhere at the sound of that music.

most of our company, stumbling accidentally on something that lay in his way, fell headlong over it; whereupon, holding down our torches, we perceived two men in Christian habits, extended cross each other, and appearing newly dead, with all the pale and frightful marks of a convulsive horror in their . . . faces. Between the feet of one there lay a pocketbook and pencil, which taking up and opening, we read with great difficulty . . . lines there written in Italian.” It seems the unfortunate Italians had been shut in by Arabs on June 18, 1701; it was then June 22. Alarmed, the explorers hurried back to the entrance, arriving just in time to see the stone shoved over the aperture by some persons above. The ladder was gone. Hill urged the company to search for some other exit, and keeping only one torch alight, they hurried from vault to vault. Suddenly they caught a glimpse of six faces against a wall ahead of them. “With one consent we fired our pistols. ’Tis impossible to make the reader sensible of the prodigious loud report and rumbling noise this one discharge created in the vault. . . . Whether fear, or some unlucky accident produced the cause, . . . the frightened guide let fall his torch, which presently extinguished.” When the smoke cleared away, they perceived a ray of light, and followed the gleam until they came to a hole in the wall, through which they finally escaped into daylight. Several Arabs were riding off with their mules; they had evidently come back to plunder the Italians and had been surprised by Hill’s party. Just then some Turkish soldiers arrived opportunely, recovered the mules, and allowed the party to finish in safety their explorations in the catacombs, and to attend to the obsequies of the Italians.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Ottoman Empire*, 264 f. The cut illustrating this adventure represents a cross section of the vaults, quite in the style of a billboard for a modern melodrama, and allows us to see the desert, two stories of the catacombs, and all that is happening above and below

After all these adventures—rather unusual for a boy—Hill returned to Constantinople, apparently near the end of the year 1701 or the beginning of 1702. In the acknowledgment of Lord Paget's kindness, prefixed to the *Ottoman Empire*, Hill writes that after visiting Palestine, Egypt, and other eastern parts, he came to Constantinople “time enough to owe the best improvements of my education to the generous care of this wise nobleman, whose instructions and example gave me first a notion of the world, and under whose protection I was afterwards so happy as to see it to advantage, having had the honor to attend him from the Turkish court to England, in a journey overland through almost all the celebrated parts of Christendom.” Lord Paget, with his suite, started on his return some time in the late spring or early summer of 1702; he went by way of Bulgaria and Roumania into Germany; in September he reached Holland, and was then ordered to proceed to Vienna; and in December he went from Vienna to the court of Bavaria. Not until April 12, 1703, did he and his suite arrive in England, after a passage from Holland that had been enlivened by a sea-fight with the French.¹⁹

The next certain date in Hill's life is that of the publication of his *Camillus* in 1707. He probably remained attached to Lord Paget's household for a short time after the return to England, and it may be to this period that the mysterious operations of a malevolent female, mentioned by his biographer, belong:²⁰ “He was in great esteem with that ground. Lady Mary W. Montagu remembered this adventure when she contradicted a statement of the admirable Mr. Hill's about the sweating pillar of St. Sophia; she says (incorrectly, according to her editor) that ‘there is not the least tradition of any such matter; and I suppose it was revealed to him in vision during his wonderful stay in the Egyptian catacombs’” (*Letters and Works*, ed. of 1887, I, 236).

¹⁹ Luttrell, *Brief Historical Relation*, IV, 287 (April 13, 1703).

²⁰ Cibber's *Lives*, V, 254.

nobleman; insomuch that in all probability he had been still more distinguished by him at his death than in his lifetime, had not the envious fears and malice of a certain female, who was in high authority with that lord, prevented and supplanted his kind disposition towards him. My lord took great pleasure in instructing him himself, wrote him whole books in different languages, on which his student placed the greatest value; which was no sooner taken notice of by jealous observation than they were stolen from his apartment, and suffered to be some days missing, to the great displeasure of my lord, but still much greater affliction of his pupil, whose grief for losing a treasure he so highly valued was more than doubled by perceiving that, from some false insinuation that had been made, it was believed he had himself wilfully lost them. But young Mr. Hill was soon entirely cleared on that head."

It may have been some such misunderstanding that started Hill off on his travels again, or it may simply have been that a good opportunity for further travel presented itself. Eighteen, he wrote later, was too early an age for a young man to think of leaving England; "this I know by personal experience, having been beholding to my latter travels for a full digestion and improvement of the unripe observations vainly gathered in my former."²¹ When a young man is sent abroad, he should be accompanied by a tutor not much older than himself, but of riper experience. It happened fortunately that a noble family in Yorkshire shared this view, and gave into Hill's charge a young gentleman, with whom he travelled for two or three years. This was William Wentworth, of Bretton Hall in Yorkshire, who was born in 1686, and succeeded his father, Sir Matthew, in the baronetcy in March, 1706.²² It is very

²¹ *Ottoman Empire*, 333.

²² Joseph Hunter, *South Yorkshire*, London, 1828, II, 243. Sir William was afterwards Deputy Lieutenant and Captain of Train

probable that their travels were brought to an end by the death of the young man's father. All that is recorded of this episode in Hill's life is that he brought his pupil home "improved," to the satisfaction of his relations. No doubt this was a more conventional tour than the former.

And now, about 1706-1707, Aaron Hill was back in England, much improved himself by his unusual education, and with one "improved" youth to his credit. What was he going to do? With the activities of his life in one's mind, one might better ask, what was he not going to do? He was evidently a very engaging young man. The pleasant impression made by his portrait in the *Ottoman Empire* (1709) is confirmed by the description of him in Cibber's *Lives*: "His person was (in youth) extremely fair and handsome; his eyes were a dark blue, both bright and penetrating; brown hair and visage oval; which was enlivened by a smile the most agreeable in conversation; where his address was affably engaging; to which was joined a dignity which rendered him at once respected and admired by those (of either sex) who were acquainted with him. He was tall, genteelly made, and not thin. His voice was sweet, his conversation elegant, and capable of entertaining upon various subjects."

One of the most picturesque figures in public life at the moment was the Earl of Peterborough. For about two years he had been carrying on the campaign in Valencia, in the interests of the Allies, who were supporting the claims of Charles of Austria to the Spanish throne; he had been the hero of several brilliant victories—notably the capture of Barcelona—and of many striking incidents. At times, he had conducted himself more like a knight errant than the general of an army. Not the least interesting bands, and M. P. for Malton. His name is in the list of subscribers both to the *Ottoman Empire* and to Hill's *Works*, 1753.

feature of this Valencia campaign was (and is) the difficulty of finding out the truth about it. Peterborough has sometimes been exalted as a hero and sometimes cried down as a mere figure-head.²³ He was, says one of his biographers, "a source of delightful possibilities; nobody knew exactly what he had done, and nobody could predict what he might not do."²⁴ His conduct in Valencia aroused some suspicions in the government at home, and he was recalled to England in February, 1707. On his way back, he visited many of the courts of Europe, conducting negotiations with powers to whom he was not accredited, and did not reach England until August. The Queen refused to see him, unless he explained satisfactorily several incidents in his career. Although he was a Whig, the Tories, out of hostility to his rival Marlborough, took up his cause, and Dr. Freind published a favorable account of his conduct in Spain. In January, 1708, a Parliamentary inquiry was held, with the result that he was neither vindicated nor censured, but was ordered to clear up his accounts.

²³ The *Military Memoirs of Captain George Carleton*, etc., 1728, long regarded as containing the direct evidence of an eye-witness of Peterborough's exploits, pictured him as a hero. These *Memoirs* were claimed for Defoe by his biographer Walter Wilson in 1830. Colonel Arthur Parnell (*History of the War of the Succession in Spain*, 1888), who believed that Peterborough himself promoted the writing of the *Memoirs* and that Swift wrote them, removed Peterborough from his prominent place in the Valencia campaign, and gave the credit of many of his exploits to others—to Prince George of Hesse-Darmstadt, Basset y Ramos, Sir John Leake, and so on. The Earl emerges from Colonel Parnell's account with his character as a general and as a man considerably battered. William Stebbing, whose *Peterborough* (1890) is named by the *Dict. of Nat. Biog.* as one of the best short accounts, takes a much more favorable view of Peterborough than Parnell. In volume IX of *The Cambridge History of Eng. Lit.*, page 25, Professor Trent—as Mr. C. E. Doble had done before—concludes that Defoe was almost certainly the shaper of Carleton's *Memoirs*.

²⁴ William Stebbing, *Peterborough*, 192. London and New York, 1890.

Peterborough's exploits in Spain were precisely of the sort to strike the imagination of Hill,—they were very unusual, they showed ingenuity and enterprise. And accordingly, Hill sat down and wrote a poem to the general—*Camillus*. The hero's name is attacked; the Muse should assist justice in proclaiming the truth; but the task of singing his praise is one of such difficulty that it causes tumultuous terrors to roll about the poet's breast—"Here justice summons; there my youth denies." After this apology, the poet plunges into the War of the Spanish Succession:

"A wild confusion o'er the globe is hurled,
And warlike earthquakes shake the Christian world."²⁵

In the confusion, Charles of Austria directs his prayers to "matchless Anne"; Anne sends to his rescue a chief formed by art and nature to revenge the wrongs of Charles; the expedition embarks for Barcelona with a good wind and swelling hopes. The greater part of the poem is taken up with a description of the capture of Montjuich, a fortress commanding Barcelona. It was a daring exploit, and in Hill's account loses nothing in exciting detail. One specimen will suffice:

"The shattered limbs of men who nobly dare
Are borne on bullets through the flaming air;
The dismal prospect shocks the bravest hearts,
And adds new motion to disjointed parts."²⁶

The walls are finally won, not by the army, but by the general who "needs no council, and who seeks no praise."

²⁵ Ed. of 1707, ll. 66-67.

²⁶ In Hill's *Works* (1753) there are a number of variations from the edition of 1707; probably he was aiming at closer expression—which too often means obscurity with him; for example:

(1707) "With helpless sighs the injured Austrian stands."
(1753) "Sighing, the young prevented Austrian stands."

The Muse would like to paint all his battles, but as that is impossible, she greets his safe return, and throws the worthless numbers at his feet.

The Earl noticed the worthless numbers, was pleased with them, inquired after the author, and made him his secretary.²⁷ This enterprising and travelled young man had expressed in his indifferent poem precisely what Peterborough felt to be true of himself—that he needed no counsel but his own. It is easy to see what sympathy might exist between such a man as Peterborough and young Hill. The Earl was an adventurous spirit, “irrepressibly elastic,” with a brain “so fruitful in combinations that they jostled and thrust one another out”;²⁸ and just those terms could be used in describing Hill, though he had not as yet established his claim to them.

The connection with Peterborough is said to have lasted until Hill’s marriage in 1710.²⁹ Possibly he assisted the Earl in straightening out his accounts; and since he is believed to have kept no accounts worth mentioning, the task could not have been absorbing.³⁰ The vindication of Peterborough in 1710, after a renewed inquiry, was not the re-

²⁷ Cibber’s *Lives*, V, 255.

²⁸ Stebbing, *Peterborough*, 227.

²⁹ As late as September 17, 1709, Peterborough was taking an interest in the Hill family, for Hill writes to Archdeacon Warley that his brother is “sure of a considerable curacy and promise of a presentation from the Earl of Peterboro, on the death of an old and sickly incumbent.” The brother had evidently been misconducting himself at Clare Hall, Cambridge, and wished to make atonement by taking orders, “tho . . . unqualified by the Formality of a Degree”; he will be grateful to the archdeacon for a recommendation to the Bishop of London for leave to be ordained (Add. MSS. 27997. f. 78. Aaron Hill to the Archdeacon of Colchester).

³⁰ “As he could render no regular accounts, his property was attached till he should have cleared up his pay-lists. . . . Throughout the remainder of 1708 and the early months of 1709 he was occupied with the compilation of ledgers.” Stebbing, 169.

sult of a satisfactory statement of his accounts—it simply meant that there were then more Tories than Whigs in Parliament.³¹ The secretary also examined the Earl's papers. Pope, commenting, many years after, on a flattering reference to Peterborough in Hill's *Advice to the Poets* (1731), wrote to Hill that really no one but the general himself could do his cause full justice: "I have long pressed him to put together many papers lying by him to that end. On this late occasion, he told me you had formerly endeavored the same, and it comes into my mind that on many of those papers I had seen an endorsement, A. H., which I fancy might be those you overlooked. My lord spoke of you with great regard, and told me how narrowly you both missed of going together on an adventurous expedition."³² Joseph Warton notes that this was an expedition to the West Indies;³³ there was a rumor current in July, 1708, that Peterborough was to be appointed governor of Jamaica,³⁴ and it may be to this that Warton refers. Pope's letter bears witness to the continuation, long after the close of the secretaryship, of Hill's friendly relations with the Earl; and Hill visited Peterborough at Parson's Green not long before the latter's death.³⁵

That Hill's duties were not arduous is evident from the

³¹ The Earl is said to have introduced Hill to the Tories, Harley and St. John; and though Hill was not a party man—the one thing he did not do to any extent was to engage actively in politics—he never lost his admiration for Bolingbroke. *Merope* and *Gideon* were both dedicated to him; see in the *Merope* dedication such lines as

"Find every grace that smiles twixt pole and pole,
And all the muses met—in St. John's soul."

³² Pope to Hill, April 4, 1731. *Col.* of 1751.

³³ *Works of Pope*, ed. by Warton, 1797, VIII, 330. Peterborough had received the same appointment in 1702, but did not go.

³⁴ Stebbing, *Peterborough*, 169.

³⁵ The visit is recorded in the introduction to Hill's *Fanciad*. They talked of Marlborough and his modesty.

record of his literary activity during this period. The year 1708 saw two of his poems published, his *Ottoman Empire* advertised as ready for publication, and a connection with the *British Apollo* established. He was probably frequenting the coffee-houses and mingling in literary society. We find him associated with Nahum Tate in a translation, and helping his old school-fellow Gay to get on his feet. Gay's first poem, *Wine*, was advertised in May, 1708, in the *Daily Courant*, together with the *Celebrated Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses*, by Tate and Hill. Rumor assigns to Gay as his earliest employment, after he gave up his trade of mercer, that of secretary to Hill: "Gay became amanuensis to Aaron Hill, Esq., when that gentleman set on foot the project of answering questions in a weekly paper called the *British Apollo*."³⁶ Whether or not Gay was really his secretary, he probably was much in the company of Hill at the time; for when, in 1736, Savage wished to collect information about Gay, he applied to Hill as apparently the one who could tell most of his early career. Hill mentioned Budgell and Pope as better informed; but added that Gay was secretary to the Duchess of Monmouth about 1713, and continued so until he went over to Hanover in 1714; and after the fall of the Tories, he was helped by Pope: "I remember a letter," writes Hill, "wherein he [Pope] invited him to partake of his fortune (at that time but a small one), assuring him, with a very unpoetical warmth, that as long as he himself had a shilling, Mr. Gay should be welcome to sixpence of it; nay, to eightpence, if he could contrive but to live on a groat."³⁷

That Hill was connected with the *British Apollo* is established by the facts that the numbers for the first year, 1708, contain a dozen or more short poems, unsigned, but later

³⁶ *Key to Three Hours after Marriage*, 1717.

³⁷ Hill to Savage, June 23, 1736. *Works*, I, 338 f.

included in Hill's acknowledged works; and that a Mr. Marshall Smith, who edited the second edition of this first volume, figures in Savage's *Miscellany* as author with Hill of a dialogue on riches and poverty. Hill's works, too, both the *Ottoman Empire* and *Elfrid*, were extensively advertised in the paper. The *British Apollo* was started in February, 1708, by a "society of gentlemen"; the second volume (1709) was "performed" by some of the gentlemen concerned in the first. As to their identity, it is perhaps enough to quote Apollo's own answer to a correspondent's question about their age, number, and share in the work: "It must suffice to say that the number of the society is large enough, and all of them of sufficient age, to answer far more pertinent questions than yours."

The *British Apollo* was by far the most important and successful of the imitators of Dunton's *Athenian Gazette* (later the *Athenian Mercury*), which had appeared twice a week for six years, from March, 1690.³⁸ The purpose of Dunton's publication—a seventeenth century *Notes and Queries*—was to resolve "all the most nice and curious questions proposed by the Ingenious of either Sex"; and this was also the chief purpose of the *British Apollo*. But to the "curious amusements for the ingenious," Apollo added "the most material occurrences, foreign and domestic," and much verse,—which had been very sparingly printed in the *Athenian Mercury*. In both papers there are questions concerning the Bible, medicine, physics, mathematics, and ethics; discussions of love problems; queries why negroes are black, why the Lord took six days instead of one minute to create the world, why it hails in warm weather, what causes freckles, how to know true religion, whether English was spoken at the Tower of

³⁸ See *The English Literary Periodical of Morals and Manners*, by John Griffith Ames, 1904, pp. 7-22. ~

Babel, and so on. Most of the answers in the *British Apollo* are serious in tone, but a few attempt to be humorous.³⁹ The *Female Tatler*⁴⁰ was witty at the expense of the paper, classing its querists as drapers, grocers, alehouse keepers, and such trash, and declaring that the apprentices in Cheap-side consult Apollo before making love to their mistresses. But the paper, like its predecessor, answered a real demand of the public, and drew its patrons from many walks of life; and it had a very successful career, until it was supplanted in popular esteem by the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. In all probability, Hill had long ceased to have any connection with it when his friend Gay, in his *Present State of Wit* (May 3, 1711), found room in a postscript for a slighting reference: "Upon a review of my letter, I find I have quite forgotten the *British Apollo*, which might possibly have happened from its having of late retreated out of this end of the town into the country; where, I am informed, however, that it still recommends itself by deciding wagers at cards, and giving good advice to shopkeepers and their apprentices." A week after Gay's comment, the paper died.

Those poems that are certainly of Hill's authorship are not at all remarkable, and are very short.⁴¹ Of the lighter

³⁹ An example of Apollo's wit may be quoted from vol. II, no. 7: A querist had formerly troubled Apollo with a question how to win the love of a lady; he followed directions and won it; now he wished to know why ladies are fond of lap-dogs and singing-birds; "for the same reason," replies Apollo, "that your mistress was conquered by your wit—because they are little."

⁴⁰ No. 30. It lived from July to March, 1709–1710.

⁴¹ *The Lover's Degree of Comparison* (*Apollo*, ed. of 1711, I, 34; *Works*, 1753, III, 11); *Jostling in Snowy Weather* (I, 49, and *Works*, III, 359); *The Lover's Complaint* (I, 60, and *Works*, III, 231); *The Transport* (I, 233, and *Works*, III, 232); *The Happy Man* (I, 49, and *Works*, III, 163); *Amorous Scrutiny* (I, 60, and *Works*, III, 360); *Blowing Kisses at the Playhouse* (I, 49, and *Works*, III, 344).

verse, the *Lover's Degree of Comparison* is a fair example:

“ Happy the man who does Celinda view.
 More happy he who sees and loves her too.
 Most happy, sure! of all mankind is he,
 Who, loving her, beloved by her shall be.”

The Transport shows Hill already addicted to Pindaric verse:

“ Mount, my freed soul! forsake thy loosening clay,
 Broadly at once expand thy wingy zeal;
 Rapture, involved in raptures, feel,
 And through yon dazzling regions cut thy way,” etc.

A more ambitious attempt, on the lines of *Camillus*, was inspired by an event that occurred in the spring of 1708. In March, a French fleet assembled at Dunkirk, with the Pretender on board, and on March 17 set sail for Scotland, where some attempts had been made to organize a rebellion in favor of the Pretender. The fleet missed the Firth of Forth, was closely pursued by the English fleet under the command of Admiral Byng, encountered heavy storms, and after about three weeks, put back into Dunkirk, having lost some four thousand men from sickness, tempest, and capture.⁴² On this subject Hill wrote *The Invasion*, addressed to the Queen.⁴³ The poem tells how the fiend Ambition disturbs the repose of the king on Gallia's throne; how the king and the Pretender plan an invasion; how the

⁴² See *The Political History of England*, ed. William Hunt and Reginald L. Poole, IX, ch. VII, 134 f. London, 1909.

⁴³ The poem is by “Mr. Hill”; and is almost certainly Aaron Hill's work, for it is very much like *Camillus* in style and subject. The fact that it is not included in his collected *Works* proves nothing, for another long poem, *The Fanciad*, is not included either; and we have his word (Forster MSS.) that he had many published and unpublished poems from which he was making a selection for his *Works*. Thomas Bickerton was the printer of *Camillus*, *The Invasion*, and (with William Keble) the *Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses*.

army and fleet assemble at Dunkirk, where “tonitruous drums” beat, “neighing horses snort a great design,” and warlike ensigns “in pendant curlings fan the wanton air.” England hurriedly despatches her fleet against the invaders :

“ Britannia’s sons with cheerful shouts come nigh,
And their loud triumphs pierce the vaulted sky;
On the high decks, the graceful chiefs appear;
Invite the battle and disdain to fear.
Their sprightly trumpets gay defiance sound,
And wondering fishes dance in shoals around.”

No wonder the Pretender’s knees knock together at the sight. To see the battle that follows, Neptune takes up his station on a rock, Jove reclines on a cloud, and all the gods look on, stretched at wanton ease upon the strengthened air. Jove chooses for some reason to help the French tyrant by interposing a cloud of darkness between the navies, and Neptune, furious, stirs up a storm that nearly destroys the French fleet.

“ Such fate may Anna’s foes forever find;
May Heaven on her still smile, nor Hell disturb her mind.”

In May, 1708, Nahum Tate and Hill appeared together as the authors of a translation, *The Celebrated Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses*, from the 13th book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. They dedicated it to the illustrious youth of the nobility and gentry, to assist them in learning to speak in affairs of state; since Ajax lost his cause and Ulysses won his, their methods are worthy of study. The authors are not discouraged by previous renderings of the same passages, even by the Master of the Muses,—“there’s a double Benefit will accrue from having various Translations of so Excellent a Piece, (viz.) That (amongst us) all the Beauties of the Original may be catcht, with perhaps,

a heightening Stroke, in some Places; and likewise a fuller Display of our own Language, which (after all) will be of the greatest Service to You, Auspicious Youths, when you come into Public Business.” The chief object is to inflame the blooming glories (the young men?) of Great Britain with a love of classical learning. Tate has an address to the reader, acquainting him that “ ‘twas the Usefulness of this Essay that prevailed with the Ingenious Gentleman concerned with me to perform his Part.” The speech of Ulysses was translated by Hill, in the usual heroic couplets, smooth enough and not remarkable in any way.⁴⁴

We now come to his most pretentious work thus far—his *Ottoman Empire*. It was advertised in the *British Apollo* for July 2, 1708: “Whereas the present state of Æthiopia, etc., in folio, with cuts, by Mr. Aaron Hill, should have been published last April, but was delayed for filling the subscriptions, this is to give notice that the copy is now sent to the press, and that the author will speedily advertise in the public news.” But it was not until the following March that the book came out, with a dedication to the Queen.⁴⁵

There are fifty-two chapters, dealing with the extent of

⁴⁴ A few lines may be quoted:

“Here, to and [sic] end, his Speech Great Ajax draws,
And rising Murmurs spoke the Camp’s Applause,
Which soon th’ Appearance of Ulysses drown’d,
Who fix’d his Eyes a while, upon the Ground:
Then to the lofty Bench his Aspect rais’d,
And, while expecting Crowds in Silence gaz’d,
With Words like These, He acts a subtil Part,
And dress’d his Speech in all the Charms of Art.”

I have not seen this book, of which the John Rylands Library of Manchester, England, has a copy; but I have photographs of the title-page, dedication, and some pages of the text.

⁴⁵ Advertised in the *Daily Courant*, March 12, 1709, and in the *British Apollo*, March 30, 1709.

the Turkish Empire, the Turkish policy, the military and civil government of the Turks, their religion and morals, their trade, their wives, their funerals, the public and private buildings in Constantinople, and the Grand Signior's Seraglio; the Greeks, the Armenians, Egypt, *Æthiopia*, the source of the Nile, Palestine, Arabia, and the Red Sea. The book concludes with two chapters, one on the probable fate of the Ten Tribes of Israel, and the other containing instructions for the traveller. In the general arrangement of topics, there is some resemblance to Sir Paul Rycaut's *Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1668), which treats of the manners and customs, the laws, the religion, the military forces, and the political maxims of the Turks. So far as Turkey itself is concerned, there was probably little really new information in Hill's work; in the discussion of the different religious sects of the Turks and of their marriage and divorce laws, and in the estimate of their military forces, Hill and Rycaut agree rather closely. But the chapters on Greece and the *Ægean*-islands,—with their almost Byronic lamentations over the degeneracy of the Greeks,—and those on Egypt and Arabia, must have been more novel; and the description of the great pyramid, which Hill explored in the party of an adventurous Bashaw, who defied native superstition to enter it, is very interesting. The work is that of a curious and observant, but very young man, eager to show his learning by much classical quotation, and his early wisdom by many moral reflections.

The book is illustrated by seven plates, each dedicated to some member of the nobility: an Egyptian hieroglyphic⁴⁶ to the Countess of Peterborough, the adventure in the catacombs to the Earl, a Grecian wedding to Sir William Wentworth, the inner plan of the Seraglio to the Countess

⁴⁶ The interpretation of hieroglyphics offered no difficulties to Hill.

of Warwick, the outside view of it to Lord Paget, a Turkish funeral to Sir Alexander Cairnes, and the picture of Turks of quality at dinner to the Duchess of Ormond. These noble names indicate one reason why Hill published the book by subscription—his connection with Lord Paget, Peterborough, and the Wentworth family evidently made possible the securing of a long list of subscribers.⁴⁷ Another reason was annoyance at the booksellers: having printed some few little essays “the common way,” he knew the booksellers and was far from approving of them; in fact, he intimates that Britain could produce wretches as barbarous and sordid as any he ever met with among the infidels. They presumed to claim two books free for every six subscriptions, and when he remonstrated with them, they cried down his book in every way they could. Not that he is not perfectly willing to listen to fair and just objections! But the objections he has heard are not reasonable. He takes them up in his preface.

“Some snarlers do, and many more may, cavil at the style I have made use of, and the weightiest arguments they bring against it are that it appears affected and elaborate; that 'tis dressed in a romantic air, and that, in short, 'tis so like poetry, that it runs into blank verse measure and becomes a kind of prose-poetic composition. . . . As for its being dressed in a romantic air, were that malicious accusation full as just as 'tis absurd, I cannot see the reasons why it should be looked upon as an objection. Everybody knows the language of romances differs from more serious writings only in the fine descriptions, florid speeches, artful turns, and winning eloquence which

⁴⁷ There were 424 names on the list. Pope had 575 subscribers to the *Iliad*. Among the names on Hill's list were the Queen, the Dukes of Devonshire and of St. Albans, the Earl of Bath, the Marquis of Granby, Lord Halifax, the Duke and Duchess of Ormond, John Gay, and William Fortescue.

are made use of to adorn and recommend a feigned relation." And if these ornaments shine in a feigned account, why not much more in a true? If his style is near poetry, is not poetry better than prose, and is not the best prose, therefore, that which is nearest poetry? "That I might not alone inform, but please my reader, I have taken care in the succeeding sheets to introduce as many stories as I could, with different aims; for some are moral, some diverting, others melancholy, and of all kinds some." They may be called digressions; but are they not, like the moral and occasional reflections, good things to have?

The stories are sometimes diverting enough, but the style is often still more diverting. It is occasionally easy and familiar, especially when it addresses itself to the ladies: "Now to give you British Ladies an enlivening taste of Turkish arrogance to your deserving sex, and let you see how little cause you have to grieve that we possess a just and mild preheminence by Nature's laws and those of matrimony," he translates a Turkish song, one stanza of which reads,

"But though she proudly dares rebel
The time will come when I shall see
The poor inferior wretch in hell,
Not worthy once to look on me." ⁴⁸

At other times, it is what he probably called poetical. Chapter XIII, on Turkish wives, begins: "The inimitable Virgil was undoubtedly inspired with Love and Truth when he asserted this so oft experienced maxim,

"Omnia vincit Amor, et nos cedamus amori."

The roughest heroes of the ancient world, amidst the dusty scenes of war and ruin, red with blood of undistinguished slaughter, and encompassed round with care and danger,

⁴⁸ P. 42.

often slackened nature's springs, and sinking calmly from the love of glory, let their laurels wither on their heads, and lost the sense of honor, and renown, entirely stupefied in all their faculties, and slumbering meanly in the downy scenes of this lethargic passion."

Hill himself later looked upon all this with very different feelings. When an attempt was made in 1739 to issue a pirated edition, he begged Richardson to do something to stop it:⁴⁹ "I was in hopes that in a town where the best things I am able to write are so little regarded, the worst might have been suffered to sleep in their merited neglect and obscurity . . . To confess the truth, I was so very a boy when I suffered that light piece of work to be published, that it is a sort of injustice to make me accountable for it."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Hill to Richardson, December 19, 1739. Richardson's *Correspondence*, ed. Mrs. Barbauld, I, 35.

⁵⁰ I am informed by Professor Trent that in *Mercurius Politicus* for May, 1720, Hill's *Ottoman Empire* was mentioned in very questionable company. The occasion was an attack on Defoe's "History" of the deaf and dumb fortune-teller Duncan Campbell, which was styled a "wretched Book," and associated with "such scoundrel Books as . . . *Robinson Crusoe*, the *Travels of Aaron Hill Esq; into Turkey*, *Psalmazzaar's History of the Island of Formosa*, and the more scandalous *Tale of a Tub* . . . Works only fit to lead the ignorant into Error, and to waste the Time, and deprave the Taste of such as being more knowing read them only for 'Diversion.'" In the number of the same periodical for July, everything that had been said against the "History" of Duncan Campbell was taken back, the editor having had time to read it carefully. It is interesting to know that this editor was no less a person than Daniel Defoe, the biographer of Campbell and of Robinson Crusoe, and it seems clear that both notices in *Mercurius Politicus* were designed to call attention to his newest book. His attitude, therefore, towards Hill's *Ottoman Empire* is scarcely worthy of more than a moment's amused attention. He is not known to have had any personal relations with Hill, but he appears to have had some sort of a quarrel with Hill's friend William Bond (cf. *post* chapters IV and V), probably over this very life of Duncan Campbell.

A second issue was published in March, 1710, with a preface by the printer Mayo, announcing that he had purchased the right to this edition. It contained commendatory verses; one of them speaks of Hill's Ascanian youth exhibiting the bounteous product of Nestorian years; and another, by Marshall Smith, reads:

"Let Heaven point out a man like thee, possessed
Of all the charms that can inspire the blest;
A scholar, courtier, poet, and divine,
Historian, traveller, and all that's fine."

In the year of this second edition Hill married. His wife was the daughter and heiress of Edmund Morris, of Stratford in Essex, and the marriage was apparently a very happy one. Of the nine children, only four lived, to bear the names of Urania, Astraea, Minerva, and Julius Caesar. The marriage marks a turning point in his life; for it prevented him from going abroad with Peterborough in November—his wife would not hear of the trip;⁵¹ and the fortune it placed at his disposal enabled him to embark on the projects, literary and commercial, that from this time on filled his life. So varied, numerous, and complex were his activities, that an attempt to record them in chronological order would be merely confusing. Only by grouping them—into commercial schemes, theatrical enterprises, and relations with other literary men—can their significance be brought out. Broadly speaking, chronology is not so badly violated as one might expect in such a treatment; for the most important projects occupy roughly the years between 1712 and 1730; the most important work for the stage, the years 1730–1738, though much has to be recorded during the twenty years preceding; and the rela-

⁵¹ Letter to Peterborough, November 10, 1710. *Works*, I, 1.

tions with other authors extend from 1725 to 1750. In that order they will be considered. In 1710-1711, Hill had a brief but interesting connection with the theatre, best treated with his other theatrical connections. Then, in 1712, he turned to devote himself to the commercial advancement of England.

CHAPTER II

HILL'S PROJECTS

Hill, the indefatigable projector, passed his early manhood in an age of projects. The time-spirit of that age, easily evoked for the imagination even today by the mere names of Mississippi Bubble or South Sea Bubble, was one of reckless speculation. The establishment in 1694 of the Bank of England removed one restriction that had fettered commerce—lack of capital; and laid the basis of the credit system—a new and powerful economic instrument, ready for the experiments of men who did not yet understand its use. Then, after the Revolution, the regulated companies that had controlled trade gradually sank in importance, and left an opening for individual enterprise. As small traders found it possible to speculate on changes in the market rates, legitimate business became more and more speculative. The system of joint-stock trading made it easy for the outside public to share the gains, without sharing the cares, of business. “The new trades which were being opened up, and the new industrial facilities which the credit system seemed to offer, appeared to have turned the heads of many of the men of that day.”¹ The vision of unbounded wealth had all the compelling power of the earlier visions of political and religious liberty. Men who were no longer stirred by ideals, over which the last two generations had fought, were excited by lotteries, dazzled by the

¹ W. Cunningham: *Growth of English Industry and Commerce in Modern Times*, 4th ed. of 1907, Part I, 447. For the characteristics of this period see also Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*, vol. III, and Lecky, *Eighteenth Century*.

splendor of the Mississippi Bubble, and thrown into frenzy by the seemingly unlimited possibilities of the vast and little understood South Sea scheme. Then came the bursting of that gigantic bubble. The fever subsided, leaving behind it a distaste for projects, which extended to innovations of all kinds, and made the Walpole era conspicuous for the lack of public spirit and public enterprise.

Yet all the projects before 1720 were not bubbles, inspired by the gambling instinct. There were projectors genuinely interested in improving the condition of their countrymen by the introduction of new inventions, the establishment of new industries, even the reform of social conditions. One need only think of Defoe, and of some of the ideas in his *Essay upon Projects*,² to realize how near allied the projector might be to the reformer, and both to the sane and practical man of business. To the more disinterested class of projectors—not, unfortunately, to the more practical—belonged Hill. His devotion to inventions and new enterprises was not to be affected by the mere bursting of bubbles, for it was based on persistent, if not always fruitful, researches in chemistry, physics, medicine, agriculture; and nourished by an insatiable desire to benefit somebody—or rather everybody—and by an incurable belief in himself. When his schemes failed, as they had an unlucky habit of doing, he deplored the loss of his own time and money much less than the loss to his country of the good he was firmly convinced it was in his power to bestow.

The most opprobrious epithet Hill's enemies could find for him in later years was "beech-oil projector." The germ of his famous beech-mast project—destined, in his own opinion, to make more noise than any discovery in the way of trade for ages past—lay in an incident that occurred

² Such as the establishment of academies for women, of asylums for the feeble-minded, and so on.

on his adventurous journey to Turkey in 1700. On his arrival at Naples he caught a severe cold; the apothecary advised oil of almonds, and the boy observed with interest the process of beating the nuts with an iron pestle and then squeezing them in a wooden press. "A few days after," to quote his own words, "I went with an Italian friar to see the burning mountain Vesuvius, the cave, the grotto, the tomb of Virgil, and many other rarities of that celebrated neighborhood; and happening one day to take a by-road for expedition, we crossed a very large wood. . . . As we rode along, the boughs, which were at that time overloaded with full-ripe mast, hung low and were exceeding troublesome, so that I was often forced to bend forward upon my horse, and to make use of a strong stick to guard off the branches." He ate several of the kernels that fell down on his hat, and finding the taste not unlike that of almonds, concluded that, if taste and substance were similar, the effects of pressing almonds and beech-nuts would be similar. So he pocketed several, dried them, and with the apothecary's mortar and pestle made an oil that the apothecary himself could not distinguish from that of almonds. So far Hill's "natural curiosity" led him; he carried some of the oil about for a year or so on his travels, and then forgot the incident.³

"In the year 1712, some affairs of no great consequence calling me into the west of England, I returned about the middle of September from Devonshire, and taking no direct road, came along by Henley and the woodiest part of Maidenhead Thicket, where, for twelve or fourteen miles together, a man can hardly see any other wood but beech."⁴ Reminded of Naples by the sight of the mast, Hill resolved to see what sort of oil the English nut yielded. It proved

³ *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Beech-oil Invention, 1715.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

excellent. He experimented with it for various uses: the clothiers, the perfumers, and the apothecaries all liked it better than the oil they used. A short investigation proved that the demand for oil was enormous. Then he journeyed through the greater part of twenty-two counties in search of beech, and found in the least of them enough to supply oil to three kingdoms three times over. The next question was how to raise stock to develop this new industry. Optimistic as he was, he found it difficult to understand why people did not embrace him as a benefactor to his kind, and pour out money at the first hint of the secret. They did not, however; they treated him as a mere borrower of money and assailed him with cries of "whim" and "project." He saw that he would have to explain his process fully; and in order to do so safely, he took out on October 23, 1713, a patent for fourteen years, and then published his first proposals in January, 1714.

In this pamphlet,⁵ Hill gives an abstract of the letters patent granted by the Queen to her trusty and well-beloved subject. Then, after a few reflections upon the opposition every new proposal meets with from the envious and the ignorant (his sentiments on this head expanded into eloquence within a few months), he states that there are many hundred thousands of acres of beech within fifty miles of London; and one bushel of mast will produce two gallons of oil, far better than most of that for which England pays thousands of pounds yearly to Portugal, Spain, and Italy. The new discovery will give better oil at cheaper rates for the soap and woolen manufactures,⁶ raise the rent of many

⁵ *An impartial account of . . . a new discovery . . . to make . . . oil from the fruit of the Beech-tree.* 1714.

⁶ Any scheme that had reference to the woolen manufactures touched a vital question. Defoe, in his *General History of Trade*, August, 1713, speaks of their preservation as the great concern of the nation; the French run every risk to get hold of English wool, and

estates, employ great numbers of the poor, and enable England to supply other nations (like Holland and Sweden) that have no beech.

All possible objections, however, shall be answered. Some say there is not enough beech. Yet Sussex, Surrey, Oxford, Berkshire, and many other counties are so full of it that a horseman can scarcely see the sun through the branches, and the mast hangs like ropes of onions; right along the banks of the Thames are woods, "as if they courted the conveniency of water-carriage." That the price will be too high for profit is another objection, answered by a scale of charges for every hundred acres—labor, carriage, ware-housing, and so on; the cost would be less than eight pounds, the sale-price, thirty pounds a tun. The possibility of a combination on the part of the owners of woods to raise the price of mast alarms some people, but does not disturb Hill. Would seven or eight hundred gentlemen, far apart from one another and unacquainted, maintain a malicious league? If such a mad alliance were practicable, there is enough mast in the unenclosed woods the prohibition to restrain its export is ineffective; "unless some speedy method be taken to redress this grievance . . . we may soon shake hands with our foreign trade." In his *Appeal to Honor and Justice*, 1714 (vol. VIII, 205, of Aitken's edition), he says that were the wool kept from France and the English manufactures spread there upon reasonable duties, the improvement the French have made in woolen manufacture would soon decay. Even the philosophers concerned themselves with the subject: Mandeville (*Essay on Charity and Charity Schools*) declares that it is not the smuggling into France that is ruinous; the trouble is that they can manufacture more cheaply because their labor is cheaper; make English laborers more contented by keeping them ignorant, and England can increase her exports more effectively than by sitting still and damning her neighbors. Hill's plan—to make the manufacturing cheaper by obviating the necessity of heavy imports of oil—has more of humanity and social justice than Mandeville's. To go far beyond this period, Dyer's *Fleece* (1757) has a passage in Book II on the dangerous smuggling of wool.

of France—where their olives make them indifferent to any other kind of oil—to render importation profitable. A letter from W. Cecil, at Paris, October, 1713, is quoted in proof. It is true that there are bad years, perhaps two out of three; but mast may be stored without deterioration for a couple of years, or imported from abroad, where the trees are not subject to “insular mutations of weather.” That the oil will not keep may be disproved by a very simple experiment: expose olive oil and beech oil together for a day in the sun; the former will become rank, the latter remain good. As to the objection that the stock proposed will make more oil than can be disposed of, England imports perhaps twenty thousand tuns and makes fifty thousand tuns at home from rape seed; the stock will not produce one-twentieth of this yearly consumption. “I hope I have said enough,” concludes Hill, “to convince any man living that this undertaking will be very profitable.” Samples of the mast were fastened to the books, with instructions how to test its oiliness by burning.

The stock was to be 20,000 pounds, one-fourth down, and the rest at Michaelmas, 1714. Subscribers were to receive an annuity of 50 per cent. upon the sum subscribed, to continue until the expiration of the patent, which was assigned to them by a deed enrolled in Chancery. The company was to be governed by nine directors, elected by a majority of the subscribers from their own number; and though the Patentee was to be at the head of the board, he might be removed by the directors, if he failed to give satisfaction. “The Oil Annuity Office will be kept at the Patentee's house, against the upper end of the Duke of Montague's, in Great Russell Street, in Bloomsbury; where the books are now opened, in order to receive subscriptions.”

As a patron for the enterprise, Hill fixed upon the Earl

of Oxford,—not a very lucky choice, since his power ended even before the fall of the Tory administration at the death of the Queen in July. In a letter to Oxford of April 12, 1714,⁷ Hill admits having already troubled him anonymously before. This was with a scheme for remitting the land tax by a new sort of contribution, which would be paid “insensibly,” and bring in a revenue of four millions yearly.⁸ Oxford’s failure to inquire further about it has deprived us of the details.⁹ A year later, in the third beech-mast pamphlet, the same scheme is outlined in the same terms, to be more fully demonstrated “if I have the honor of a vote in the next Parliament, in gratitude to those honest burgesses, who were lately pleased to send me up an invitation to represent them, under the common seal of their corporation.”¹⁰ But Hill never had the opportunity to reveal his plan in Parliament. The letter concerning beech-mast was thus his second attempt upon Harley. With a sample of the product new to Britain, he sent a sample of his own proficiencry as poet and flatterer,—a poem, “no more than an honest man’s poor acknowledgment of duty inexpressible.” *The Dedication of the Beech Tree* hails the happy tree:

⁷ Stowe MSS. 143, f. 128; also Sloane MSS. 4253.

⁸ See letter to Oxford, April 14, 1714, *Works*, I, 3; and May 12, 1714, *Works*, I, 7.

⁹ There were probably many of these schemes for remitting the land-tax. The *Examiner*, September 25, 1713, advertises proposals for an easy tax to raise two or three millions, in room of the land tax, to pay the public debts.

¹⁰ In 1711 a bill was passed that all members of Parliament, except the eldest sons of peers and those who sat for universities or Scotch constituencies, must possess landed property, the borough members to the extent of 300 pounds and country members 600 pounds a year. Lecky, *Eighteenth Century*, I, 128. That Hill was considering Parliament at all indicates that he had some property at this time.

“Would after ages know
To whom their sons thy oily harvests owe,
Oxford's loved name deep on thy bosom grave,
Who from his country did his country save;
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Whose known esteem of arts gave birth to thee,
Omen of greater, which ere long shall be.”

And among these greater things are several of Hill's most cherished projects: the teeming glebe is soon to swell with floods of generous wine; that “various insect” which spins out its little life's industrious thread—the silk-worm, in plain terms—is to be acclimated; more important than all, the gummy pine in Scotland is to shed its pitchy store, and the tall firs are to fright the seas. Something else is to happen, too; but whether the last lines are a propheey of the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal, or the discovery of the Northwest Passage, I cannot decide; perhaps of all, for Hill saw many visions and dreamed many dreams. In concluding his letter, he humbly—and vainly—requests the honor of attending on Harley in some unbending moment.

The result of the first proposals is stated in the second pamphlet, published in May, 1714:¹¹ the 20,000 pounds was subscribed in ten days.¹² But it happened unfortunately that 1713 was a very thin year for mast; it was not, as in 1712, hanging on the trees like ropes of onions. 1714 was to be a wonderful year, but 1715 would again be poor. In view of that prospect, therefore, Hill wished to increase his stock, in order to lay up a supply of mast for two years. The new proposals were for 100,000 pounds in fifty-pound shares, one-tenth to be paid down. The directors increased

¹¹ The proposals are advertised in the *Examiner*, May 10–14, 1714.

¹² An advertisement in the *Englishman*, January 23, 1714, states that 13,000 pounds was subscribed in nine days, “notwithstanding the ridiculous reports and mistaken notions which have with so much malicious industry been spread abroad to discourage the undertaking.”

in number from nine to thirteen, were to be placed in possession, without charge, of the granaries on the Thames for two years; all expenses of operation were to be borne by the patentee, in return for his one-tenth of the purchase money; with the other nine-tenths, to be called for as the directors should appoint, the directors were to pay for the mast and issue such quantities to the patentee as he required, receiving from him double the sum they had paid for it. As additional security, the patentee was to make over to the directors, before Michaelmas, the work-houses, presses, oil-works, and so on, with the power, in case the mast were not paid for in two years, to take complete possession with all profits, except what was due to the annuitants on the first proposals. To support these offers and get at the reasons of those who railed at him in the coffee-houses as a projector, Hill resorted to a persuasive dialogue, between Patentee and Country Gentleman. Most of the objections disposed of in the first proposals are incorporated in this not very sprightly conversation. Among other things, the Patentee assures his interlocutor that patents do not encourage monopolies. At last Country Gentleman exclaims, “Why, it is a national benefit you propose!” “So do I love to think it,” Patentee replies.

The result, despite the cavilling of the envious, was the subscription of the total amount in a few days; and there was thus a capital of 120,000 pounds, with two sets of subscribers on different securities. Hill energetically set to work. He rented granaries and provided a work-house at Vaux-hall on the Thames, where barges from Berkshire could readily unload; not liking the machinery of the rape-mills, he planned a new engine, capable (as any engine of his would be) of doing “infinitely” more work at a quarter of the expense; and he despatched agents over England—especially to the wool manufacturing counties—and even to

Europe, to ascertain the demand for oil and the supply of beech available. During June, July, and August, 1714, these agents sent in weekly reports that were both enthusiastic and specific, though the enthusiasm began to cool a little by August. The demand for oil was indeed great, but there was a blight upon the beeches. The next year, however, was to be marvellous—they all agreed as to that. John Brown, who journeyed through Kent, Sussex, Surrey, and Hampshire, in September, must have been a man after Hill's own heart: he is in such raptures that words fail him at times. “I spoke,” he says, “with the warreners. . . . These have all prodigious tolls of beech in their several limitations, and they told me that this time two years, the whole forest was so thick with mast that they hung like hops, and bore the branches down to the very ground; and when they fell, they lay so thick that they were forced in several places to shovel them out of their foot-paths. They said that every third year is such a bearing year, and that by the early, thick, and most prodigious budding of the trees, the next season must be the greatest and most plentiful for beech-mast that ever was heard of.” The reports from Hamburg, Paris, and Orleans were favorable.¹³

Nevertheless, the rumors of blight alarmed the subscribers, only too ready, no doubt, in the unsettled state of the country, to be uneasy. To have to explain again and again that there was enough mast in England to keep the works going, and that he had contracted for more from abroad, began to weary Hill. When the time for paying the rest of the subscription drew near, he announced that those who were dissatisfied could withdraw what they had already paid in, with a 25 per cent. profit. All the subscribers on the second proposals accepted; those on the first were divided; and the result was the reduction of the stock to 15,000 pounds.

¹³ This account is given in the third Beech-oil pamphlet, 1715.

Within a short time, Hill had another set of proposals out.¹⁴ These he prefaced by some general reflections on the attitude of the public towards projects. London, it is true, has suffered so much from projects that the word has become "downright scandalous." But there is a distinction between project and discovery: one is a mere notion having no real or visible existence; the other is a fact in nature or art capable of demonstration. His scheme belongs to the second class; hence the folly and wickedness of those who "stir up a general odium against a devil of their own raising and blast the credit of this new discovery, which can possibly do no man hurt, but on the contrary will save the nation millions of money, and give bread to many thousands of families, when I and all these empty prattlers shall be dust and ashes. . . . These idle busy-bodies, these tongue-champions, who like a drum owe all their noise to their being hollow, these waspish, stingless insects, ought to know that the guilt they practice is not only a misapplication of their time, and a prostitution of their reason, but an act as base and villainous as breaking open houses, because it prevents and intercepts a blessing which would chiefly fall on the widow and the orphan." England's cunning natives are always sharpsighted at discovering impossibilities. "To refuse to be convinced, and then conclude a thing impossible, is like winking hard at noonday and swearing it is midnight."

After relieving his feelings by this outburst, he discourses on the invention of useful arts; blames the education of the day as too little practical; and promises to speak more at length some time on a "College of Arts," to train youth in the knowledge of trade and manufactures. Every comfort we have is due to some earlier project; and there are many

¹⁴ *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Beech Oil Invention, etc., 1715.*

profitable secrets yet to be discovered. "I am almost afraid to venture such a declaration among the disingenuous tempers of mankind, or I could instance and disclose some six or seven such examples, which I have myself discovered in my small pursuit of nature, as might animate the dullest clod, and would perhaps awake the sleepy genius of our nation. . . . Not that I am sharper-sighted than others; such discoveries are the result of downright industry, and thinking a little out of the beaten road." One discovery he has "lately bestowed on an honest gentleman," who will soon demonstrate the secret. "But to what purpose should I enumerate these, which I am morally assured the invincible stupidity of an unthinking age will rather turn into ridicule, than believe or make the proper use of? However, if they serve to stir up the fire of some wiser man's ingenuity, my country will be benefited, and my design has succeeded; I pay back the impudence of folly with an equal weight of scorn." He apologizes at the end for the warmth of his style—he sometimes forgets that he is not addressing his ignorant slanderers.

The new proposals increased the number of directors to twenty-five, and the stock to 200,000 pounds, divided into 5,000 shares. On each share five pounds and some odd shillings were to be paid to Hill, in consideration of past charges; forty pounds were to remain in the company's hands, to carry on the business; out of each forty pounds was to be deducted a half-yearly payment of fifteen shillings on the annuities. When dividends were made, the subscribers' charges were to be repaid, one-twentieth of the clear gain given to Hill, and the remainder divided among the subscribers to whom the patent was assigned.¹⁵ A meeting for the election of the directors—one of whom must be the patentee—was to be held March 5, 1715. The

¹⁵ The Chancery document quoted bears the date December 20, 1714.

plan has great advantages: no one can lose more than the five guineas down; no one but directors chosen by the subscribers themselves can call for more money; in a bad year, the shareholder is liable only for the thirty shillings on the annuities; in a good year, the profit will be one hundred and sixty pounds.

But the good year did not come. 1715, like 1714, disappointed all expectations of a full harvest. A final pamphlet, issued in November, 1716, records the melancholy end of the scheme. Shareholders, peevish and clamorous at the bad year, have accused the patentee of faults he is free from, and by which he is the greatest sufferer; if they looked back, they would remember "how often he publicly gave leave to the jealous to withdraw their subscriptions, and paid them back their money, when forfeited by the conditions 'twas subscribed upon; they would remember that while he held the power, there were no complaints of non-payment, though the seasons were such as allowed not a possibility of making a profit." He is not angry, being seasoned to ingratitude and not perturbed at the "sociableness of scandal." But as the bottom is still sound, in spite of one losing voyage, he desires to lay the facts before those interested.

About one-fourth of the annuitants¹⁶ had been repaid, leaving the patent charged with 7,500 pounds a year in annuities; the second and third proposals had been accepted with full understanding that the patent was so charged, and that annuitants were always to be among the directors. The first half-yearly payment (3,750 pounds) was made by the patentee, and never charged to the company. As the time for another payment drew near, Hill, seeing that the directors had been at extravagant expense for workmen in

¹⁶ The name of Edmund Morris, Hill's father-in-law, is in the list of annuitants.

an unusually wet season, and were perplexed by the non-payment of money on shares, for which they had called, contributed 20,000 pounds of his 25,000 guineas as a loan; and then proposed to the board the union of sharers and annuitants in one body. His scheme was to pay back a guinea to a thousand shareholders who had not complied with the calls, thus depriving them of any excuse for interference, and giving to the company the disposal of the thousand shares. These were to be divided among the annuitants;¹⁷ and as a further inducement to unite with the shareholders, Hill offered his right in reversion to the 10,875 pounds to which the stock was then reduced, and which the company had in possession. All but five or six consented to change,¹⁸ and gave their warrants in trust to a Mr. Kennedy, a director for the annuitants and for the company. He did receive and divide the second half-yearly payment and the thousand shares; but declared that the reversionary security of 10,875 pounds remained with the directors; the money was either lost or spent—at all events not in existence for the benefit of patentee, annuitants, or sharers.

Where, asked the patentee, lay the blame? He had fulfilled his agreement: he had put the annuitants in possession of his right in reversion to the stock by a deed enrolled in Chancery, and had entered into bond under a fifteen thousand pound penalty to indemnify the company against all future payments on account of annuities,—a bond that would become of force as soon as the stock was secured to

¹⁷ Hill calculated that with these shares, and the 3,750 pounds already paid and the same amount to be paid at Michaelmas, the annuitants would receive eighty pounds for every one hundred they had paid.

¹⁸ On the ground that the patentee must believe in the profit, or he would not have given away his twenty thousand pounds. Of course the patentee believed in the profit!

the annuitants. But the board did not fulfill the agreement. At Christmas, 1715, the patentee offered to take on himself the hazard and power of the whole affair (but accountable to the board for the money) and to bind himself to pay for three years a profit of forty shillings a year on every share. The offer was rejected. "Upon which, and many other provocations afterward," he asked for repayment of 500 pounds lent to the company; but they denied the indebtedness, and so he left them to their measures.

It is evident that the members of the board quarreled among themselves. Some hot-headed annuitants, caring little whose fault it was and much that they did not get their money, filed a bill in Chancery, charging the patentee and their own directors with a scheme to defraud them. Eventually they took possession of the patent and chose a governor of their own, being under no legal obligation to admit the sharers, who had for a year failed to pay the annuities. Hill had a plan, unnecessary to give in detail, for reconciliation and reorganization; but they probably did not even consider it. "See then," he exclaims at the end of the last pamphlet, "what a grateful and generous encouragement may be expected by men who would dedicate their labor to the profit of others!"¹⁹

Just what the final issue was is not evident. Hill's part

¹⁹ According to the facts stated in the last pamphlet, Hill must have given back at least 23,750 pounds of his 25,000 guineas. There is a reference to him in J. Oldmixon's *Court Tales* (1717), p. 52, that suggests that he was occasionally in hard straits about this time: "It was no wonder to see the fool Baevius (A-r-n H-l) in his gilt chariot this week, and the next staring through the Counter-gates, when Varus (Steele), a man of wit, set him the example. A humor which has prevailed on more wits than one, whom I have known with great pride lolling it in a gay chariot in May, and footing it with as good a grace in December." The *Tales* are scandalous stories of intrigue, and the reference to Hill and Steele is merely a passing one; probably it ought not to be taken too literally.

was over; his patent in other hands, and his profit clearly of the smallest, if any, for his four years' expense of energy and enthusiasm. Of the causes for the ill-success of the scheme, the most obvious is the failure of a good beech-mast supply for several successive years. Another, no doubt, lay in the general feeling of anxiety over the political situation and the rebellion of 1715; rumors were probably credited far more than they deserved. Hill did what he could to quiet the apprehensions of those concerned by putting everything into their own hands—a step that removed the one person who was genuinely interested more in the profit of others than in his own, and turned the management over to people with conflicting claims and selfish motives. Doubtless the remembrance of the enthusiasm with which he had made his unfulfilled prophecies acted as an irritant on those who had credited them. Yet, a soaring confidence was so vital a trait in Hill's character that his contemporaries might have been expected to recognize it and make the necessary allowances.

Discouragement with Hill was never of long duration; the failure of one project was always soon followed by the launching of another from his inexhaustible supply, just as the failure of a play or poem to win public applause was succeeded up to the last by consolatory anticipations of a more intelligent judgment from posterity. We find him next engaged with a "society of gentlemen" in a plan to publish monthly an account of some new invention. Possibly he was himself the whole society, for a MS. note on the title-page of the British Museum copy of the *Essays* reads "by Aaron Hill, Esq."; but more probably there were others concerned with him.²⁰ The purpose of the society is stated in the advertisement: "All who would have these books brought monthly to their houses, paying only

²⁰ *Four Essays*, etc., 1718. See Bibliography as to the date.

a shilling for each book, at the delivery . . . may be furnished with them, upon giving notice to the beadle of their respective parishes. For our design being nothing but the public good, we choose that way of spreading our essays, that rich and poor may have them without trouble. . . . Throughout the course of our design, there will be handled such diversity of subjects that . . . it will produce a universal solid benefit, by which there is no rank, profession, trade, or circumstance of life but will in some part or other of the treatise, be particularly . . . interested and advantaged."

The first essay, "in respect to the ladies," is upon chinaware. Although pottery was manufactured in Staffordshire in 1690, no further progress was made in England for many years; Josiah Wedgwood was not born until 1730; 1740-1745 is given as the earliest date for the established manufacture of porcelain in England; about the time of this essay, it was first produced at Dresden and Vienna. Thus the writer was not overstating the case when he said that the notion was commonly held that only in China and from one sort of soil, buried for an age or two, could fine chinaware be made. He was perhaps going a trifle too far when he asserted: "We shall prove this report to be nothing but amusement, by instructing the most ordinary potter in England to make as fine china as ever was sold by the East India Company; and that with such ease that it may be afforded as cheap as the commonest earthen ware." Then follows an explanation of the process of manufacture in China. To reproduce these results in England, all that is lacking—a somewhat serious deficiency, to be sure,—is the earth; England has potters, glaziers, and painters. The essayist is firmly convinced that tobacco pipe clay, refined *ad infinitum*, might serve. But an easier way for the present is to buy up the old broken china, grind it with a

flat stone and a runner, refine it, and mix it with quick-lime dissolved in gum-water; it will then be ready for the potter. The broken china will not, of course, last for ever, but meanwhile there is a profit in the undertaking. And if curiosity is sufficiently aroused by the success of the scheme, people may look about them and discover suitable earth in England. In that event, the essayist is prepared with an "infallible, easy, and cheap way to discover what different bottoms lie under all lands," whether marl, chalk, or clay. The method seems simple enough.

The reason for ascribing to Hill the next essay, on Coals, is slight: the cut illustrating the balls of fuel, made by mixing broken coal and Thames mud, is precisely the same as that in Sir Hugh Platt's *Jewell House of Art and Nature* (1594), a heterogeneous collection of inventions,²¹ to which a passing reference is made in the second beech-mast pamphlet. The picture is very cheering: a drawing-room fire, two symmetrical pyramids of cannon-balls on each side of the hearth, and another pyramid burning in the grate —like ten round plum-puddings alight. The essay gives minute directions about the proportions of mud and coal, the arrangements with lightermen and bargemen, and the process of working together the ingredients into balls. A bushel of these culm balls is worth two of sea coal, and costs about one-third as much.²² The Thames "owse" is so fat

²¹ The inventions form an extraordinary list, from how to prevent drunkenness (the method is not the simple one of abstaining from drink), to how to catch pigeons and make a "pleasant conceited chafing-dish." This earlier projector was less altruistic than the society of gentlemen; for he refuses to reveal the secret of the fire in the picture except upon a "reasonable consideration." In 1603, Platt published a tract entitled, "Of Coal-Balls for Fewell wherein Sea coal is, by the mixture of other combustible Bodies both sweetened and multiplied." The coal was to be mixed with clay.

²² There was great scarcity of fuel in England at this time. See Cunningham's *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, Part I, 523, ed. of 1907.

and so naturally combustible that it burns with a "striking liveliness" for six or eight hours, and makes no foul smoke. An inexhaustible supply of the necessary mixture of mud and rushes may be found in the area flooded at every tide through Dagenham Breach.

The success of the third project—the repair of Dagenham Breach—would have had the unfortunate effect of cutting off the fuel supply on which the success of the second depended. As there is nothing to connect Hill particularly with the scheme, it may be passed over.²³ The last essay in the volume deals with the manufacture of wine in England. This was a favorite scheme of Hill's: he mentioned it in the *Dedication of the Beech Tree*, and he attempted to carry it out twenty-five years later. Several passages in the essay have a Hillian stamp; for instance: "It is a remarkable flaw in the genius of our nation to distrust new improvements,"—a truth Hill was never weary of proclaiming. The experience of a farmer's wife in Kent, who found a sparkling wine in place of the verjuice she had stored away some months before, convinced "some gentlemen of our society" that only through lack of industry was England without wine of her own. In fact, six hundred years ago wine had been made in England; but the Nor-

²³ Piles were to be driven in on each shore, a strong float made of small boats fastened between them, and bricks, manufactured on the spot, rolled to the float in wheelbarrows and dumped overboard. The force of the tide would tend to spread out the stones, so as to form a solid foundation, and to fill the interstices with mud. Whatever methods were adopted were not very successful. A notice in the *St. Ives Post Boy*, July 12, 1718, states, "On Thursday seven night last, Dagenham Breach was finished and stopt, and it being then spring-tide, it did not overflow, and 'tis hoped it will withstand all storms and tempests." The *Post Boy*, March, 1720, advertises for laborers to shovel mud into the Breach; and the *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, November 18, 1721, refers to Captain Perry, "who lately stopt Dagenham Breach."

mans, wishing to make the country dependent on the wines of France, had discouraged grape culture; at least, the writer adds, if this is an "imagination," it is not an improbable one. It is true that the rainy climate of England is bad for grapes, but to offset that disadvantage the winters are milder and the frosts less severe than in France, and there are no hailstorms. The few good vineyards that even now exist in England would succeed better if these directions were followed: choose a light gravelly soil and a southern exposure upon a hillside; select grapes that ripen early and have small leaves to admit the sun; plant them in long shallow trenches, ten feet apart, and train the higher branches on a low wall. The cut that adorns the essay is inspiriting: we see the vines climbing the hill, the laborers picking grapes and trundling barrows, and the owner, cane in hand, taking the air in his vineyard.

This was the pleasing picture Hill tried later to realize. One of his chief objects in removing from London to Plaistow, in 1738, was to try out his vineyard theories. He writes to Richardson, April 12, 1739,²⁴ that he has been "defying the sharpness of the season in Essex . . . planting near a hundred thousand French vines, with resolution next year to extend them over forty or fifty acres of vineyard. For knowing perfectly well it is not our climate but our skill which is defective, both as to managing the vines in their growth, and their juice in its preparation, I have judged it an honester service to my country to establish, if I can, the success of so considerable a branch of new product to her benefit, than to busy my cares and make war on my own quiet by a fruitless concern at [public] affairs." In September, he announces that of the cuttings put out in March and April, few are less than five or six feet high, and some are already bearing fruit.²⁵ A week

²⁴ Richardson's *Correspondence*, ed. by Mrs. Barbauld, I, 22.

²⁵ September 21, 1739, *Correspondence*, I, 28.

later, he refers to a serious illness contracted by "defying the season"; but he hopes to be well enough by the middle of October to direct the making of about twenty hogsheads of wine, ripened on less than two acres.²⁶ His hope of recovery proved delusive, and the vintage had to proceed without his supervision. A year later,²⁷ he actually despatched a sample of the wine to Richardson (who had no difficulty in restraining his enthusiasm about it), but the enterprise had obviously not succeeded. The reason is not far to seek. The marshy situation of the house, which proved extremely injurious to the health of the entire family, must have had an equally bad effect on the grapes. For wine to soothe his sick hours, poor Hill had to thank his kind friend Richardson, not his own industry and skill. He attempted, indeed, to persuade his son to take up the work; but the son, a very unsatisfactory person altogether, was not likely to succeed where the father had failed.²⁸

The eagerness Hill displayed in some lengthy letters, about 1740, to William Popple, concerning grape culture in the Bermudas, proves at once his preoccupation with the subject and his discouragement in regard to English wines. Popple's brother was planning to go to the Bermudas, where another brother held the post of governor; if he would only plant vineyards there—a plan declared practicable five years before by the Board of Trade—he would make, Hill was convinced, enormous profits. Hill felt himself better fitted to give advice "than most men in England, where we are sadly defective in whatever relates to a vineyard, every circumstance whereof I had opportunities from experience abroad and long and obstinate meditation at

²⁶ Hill to Richardson, October 16, 1739, Forster MSS.

²⁷ See his letter to Richardson, September 17, 1740, *Correspondence*, I, 43. This letter contains an elaborate explanation of Hill's process of grape fermentation.

²⁸ Hill to Popple, November 12, 1740, *Works*, II, 79.

home to know both in practice and theory." The Madeira wine of Bermuda, if made according to his directions, would be finer and more saleable, beyond all comparison, than that of Madeira itself. These letters to Popple are interesting in their way, and the handling of certain objections brought forward by some of Popple's Bermuda friends, arrogantly conscious of their experience, is an effective bit of argumentation.²⁹ Hill had some reason to scorn the experience of the colonial planters; though his contempt may have appeared at the time to be that of the enthusiastic theorist for mere facts, subsequent events justified it in several instances. Don't expect new lights, he says,³⁰ from the planters and traders; "our mother country, God bless her, among the rest of her rights and immunities, has had the privilege from time immemorial to declare and believe all things impracticable, till they have been proved easy by the adventure of others." For instance, the English in Jamaica would not believe that coffee could be grown there, till they saw it done by the French, under their noses; "then, indeed, like the four-footed supporters of our woolen manufacture, they trooped quietly after their leaders." For twenty years past, he has been trying to "persuade a wooden head or two in the south of Carolina" to plant sugar-cane. The failure of one experiment, made under unfavorable conditions, convinced them that Carolina was too cold, despite all proof of the success of sugar-planting in still colder climates. "So they will continue to think, till some Frenchman of the settlements at their back makes it a common return from those colonies; and then we shall have them gravely petitioning Parliament for some aid in relief of their ignorance." It did turn out as he antici-

²⁹ The letters to Popple are dated November 30, 1740 (*Works*, II, 82), December 8 (II, 91), December 18 (II, 100), and January 1, 1741 (II, 108).

³⁰ November 30, 1740.

pated: sugar-cane was first cultivated by Jesuits near the site of New Orleans, about 1751, and it was a staple product there before it began to be grown to any extent in South Carolina and Georgia.³¹

Hill had once had more extensive plans in regard to the land south of Carolina than the mere cultivation of grapes or sugar-cane. On June 19, 1717, Sir Robert Montgomery, of Skelmorley in Ayre, obtained from the Palatine (Lord Carteret) and the Lords Proprietors of Carolina a grant for himself and his heirs and assigns of the land between the rivers Alatamaha and Savannah, with liberty to settle south of the Alatamaha. The grant erected the district into an independent province, to be called the Margravate of Azilia; courts were to be established, laws enacted by a Public Assembly, and Sir Robert himself was to be appointed governor for life. The Proprietors were to receive, in addition to a yearly quit-rent of one penny sterling an acre, one-fourth of the gold and silver ore taken from the hills of Azilia. "In consideration of all which powers, rights, privileges, prerogatives, and franchises, Sir Robert shall transport, at his own expense, a considerable number of families, with all necessaries for making a new settlement in the said tract of land; and in case it be neglected

³¹ The *Plain Dealer*, No. 99, March 1, 1725, reflects Hill's views of the open-mindedness of those in charge of colonial affairs: the agent of an American colony is represented as uttering the pious wish that the gentlemen in charge of the trade of the Colonies might be promoted to the peerage—an office of less trouble than their present one and more in proportion to their abilities; he goes on with ironical comments upon their experience and their vigor in forwarding movements for the encouragement of their countrymen abroad; in illustration, he tells of a Turkish sultan who sent several sages to encourage the industries in Egypt; they refused to remit certain taxes to the cotton planters, whose crops had suffered in an inundation, on the ground that they should have sown something that would not have been hurt by water—wool, for instance.

for the space of three years from the date of this grant, the grant shall become void, anything herein contained to the contrary notwithstanding."

His grant secured, Sir Robert published his proposals, to attract the capital necessary for the new settlement.³² He was himself well-fitted to write a prospectus: he had a fine imagination, unembarrassed by facts; and he had, too, a sort of ancestral experience in colonization, for his father had accompanied Lord Cardross on the ill-fated expedition to establish a military station near Port Royal in 1682.³³ A "colonizing humor," as he said, ran in his blood. But there were other equally imaginative and experienced gentlemen ready to assist him—among them Aaron Hill. Hill's share in the prospectus is perhaps to be found in the glowing promise of large profits, to arise, during the very first year of the settlement, from the manufacture of potash according to a new and cheap method. Hill and potash are inseparably linked by his biographers:³⁴ he experimented with his method in Scotland and at Plaistow, but his profits were all on paper, and his secret died with him. Aided, no doubt, by Hill's vision, Montgomery pictured an Eden south of the Savannah. "It lies in the same latitude with Palestine herself, that promised Canaan which was pointed out by God's own choice to bless the labors of a favorite people. It abounds with rivers, woods, and meadows. Its gentle hills are full of mines,—lead, copper, iron, and even some of silver; 'tis beautiful with odoriferous plants, green all the year. Pine, cedar, cypress, oak, elm, ash, or walnut,

³² *A Discourse concerning the design'd establishment of a new Colony to the South of Carolina, etc.*, London, 1717. Reprinted in *American Colonial Tracts*, vol. I, May, 1897. The grant is quoted in the *Discourse*.

³³ The colony was destroyed by Spaniards in 1686.

³⁴ See Cibber's *Lives*, V, 271; and the life by "I. K." in Hill's *Dramatic Works*, I.

with innumerable other sorts, . . . grow everywhere so pleasantly that though they meet at top and shade the traveller, they are at the same time so distant in their bodies and so free from underwood or bushes that the deer and other game, which feed in droves along these forests, may be often seen half a mile between them.” The soil is so fertile that orchards are raised merely to feed pigs withal. “Paradise, with all her virgin beauties, may be modestly supposed at most but equal to its native excellence. . . . Nor is this tempting country yet inhabited, except those parts in the possession of the English, unless by here and there a tribe of wandering Indians, wild and ignorant, all artless and uncultivated as the soil which fosters them.”

The most sanguine of promoters could not quite ignore the fact that the artless Indians had within the last two years made South Carolina as little as possible like Paradise. Even Montgomery admits that the “unformidable Indians” have taken advantage of the undefended position of some isolated communities; but he will avoid that danger by enclosing his settlements within military lines. The defense of each district is to be entrusted to men who will employ their odd moments in Indian warfare, and the greater part of their time in cultivating the land just within the outer walls.³⁵ A plan reveals one district of Azilia in the “fulness of her beauty”: the one hundred and sixteen squares, each with its little house, the city at the centre, the four large parks, the hunters shooting game, the laborers peacefully at work, and the guns trained upon possible Indians somewhere outside of the picture,—all combine to create a most pleasant impression of Azilia.

³⁵ There were to be no “dangerous Blackamoors” admitted into the colony; laborers were to go over on a contract, and to receive a gift of land upon the expiration of their term of service. The experiment of doing without slave labor was of course tried during the early years of the colony of Georgia.

Sir Robert offered land in the new province at forty shillings an acre. The purchasers became in effect shareholders, who received the profits of the land as dividends; and upon the least breach of Sir Robert's contract with them, they were empowered to take possession of the province. Subscribers were found on these terms, for in February, 1718, Sir Robert stated that he had already raised thirty thousand pounds among his friends.

But a more unpromising moment for the execution of the scheme could scarcely have been found. The Proprietary Government was already tottering. The Proprietors had recently been forced to admit their inability to defend the province against Indian and Spanish attacks, and the colonists had appealed to the king for help. The Crown was jealously watching for an opportunity to assume control. In so delicate a situation, the Proprietors felt it advisable to have the royal approval of their grant to Sir Robert Montgomery, and accordingly, in July, 1717, they submitted it to the king. He referred the matter to the Lords Commissioners for Trade, and they in due time consulted the Attorney General. It was his opinion that there was nothing prejudicial to the interests of the Crown in the grant, but he doubted whether the powers of government possessed by the Proprietors could be divided by them so as to exempt the new province from liability to the laws of South Carolina. A month later (April, 1718), a representation to the king, signed by Charles Cooke and three others, suggested that the Proprietors surrender their powers of government over the new province to the king, who could then appoint Montgomery governor. This they were apparently unwilling to do, and the scheme languished.³⁶

³⁶ The *Collections of the Historical Society of South Carolina* contains lists and abstracts of the papers relating to South Carolina in

A few months later, Sir Robert, having discovered that the protection of his colony from the ““poor unskilful natives of America”” would put him to greater expense than he had anticipated, petitioned the king to grant a lottery under the Scotch seal, to provide him with funds. The Attorney General, to whom the petition was referred, agreed with Sir Robert that the act against lotteries in England was probably not binding in Scotland, since it had been passed prior to the Union.³⁷ But the request was apparently denied.³⁸

The next news of Azilia is that Hill has purchased the grant. ““It is sometime,”” he writes in 1718,³⁹ to some unnamed influential lord, ““since I became concerned with Sir Robert Montgomery and some other gentlemen in a design to settle a new plantation of his Majesty’s subjects to the south of Carolina; the whole intent of which will be justly apprehended by your lordship, on perusal of the enclosed little treatise, which Sir Robert made public, with less success than he expected; upon which, and some other views which fell in his way, he declined any further endeavors for advancement of the colony proposed; and I

the old State Paper Office at London. The progress of Montgomery’s scheme may be traced in the following references: I, 189; II, 232, 234, 255, 256. For the situation in the province at this time see E. McCrady: *Hist. of South Carolina under the Proprietary Gov. 1670-1719*, 575 f.

³⁷ The date of the document quoted in *A Description of the Golden Islands* (1720) is November 15; as reference is made in it to the approval of Sir Robert’s scheme by the Board of Trade, and as their approval was expressed in February, 1718, the year is probably 1718.

³⁸ The plan was to draw out 100,000 tickets, at 40 shillings apiece; the fund was to be kept by some bank or society of general credit, and a deduction of not more than 15 per cent. to be made on all prizes and applied to the Azilia scheme. The lottery was to be drawn in Edinburgh.

³⁹ *Works*, 1753, II, 187 f.

bought his grant of him with a firm resolution to pursue the design by myself." He goes on to explain how, in a recent attempt "to improve one of our natural advantages, . . . I erred in the choice of my means, and met with disappointments which have made it necessary (for the sake of my family) that I endeavor to repair a large breach in my fortune; and I would do it, if possible, the noblest way, by owing any future prosperity of mine to some benefit I procure to my country." He points out some of the prospective benefits: the English trade with Spain is threatened by the attempts of the French to establish communication between the Lakes and the Gulf; they already have a colony on the Gulf and a chain of forts along the Mississippi; through this midland channel they will be able to reach the Spanish market, and it will then be vain to exclude them from the South Sea trade. Since the grant permits an indefinite extension of the boundaries to the south and west, Hill suggests that a settlement be established, for the purpose of watching the designs of the French, somewhere on the river of "Apalachia."⁴⁰ To meet the expense of equipping the five hundred men needed for such an expedition, Hill appeals—in almost the precise terms of Montgomery's petition—for the privilege of a lottery under the Scotch seal. Will his lordship use his influence? Hill's appeal had no more success than Montgomery's. The reason for their failure is perhaps sufficiently explained by a passage in Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*,⁴¹ under

⁴⁰ Hill evidently means the river Appalachicola, or one of its tributaries, flowing into the Gulf. On the map, his plan of sending his colonists by land from the Alatamaha to an upper branch of this waterway looks feasible enough; but the character of the country—whether swampy or heavily wooded or otherwise difficult of passage—probably did not enter into his calculations much more than did danger from the Indians.

⁴¹ III, 63.

the year 1718: "The selling or buying of chances and parts of chances of tickets in the state lotteries of Great Britain being at this time in general practise, a clause in an act of Parliament for continuing certain duties on coals and culm, etc., prohibited such practises; and also all undertakings resembling lotteries, or being on the footing of a state lottery, were strictly prohibited under the penalty of 100 pounds over and above all penalties enjoined by former acts of Parliament against private lotteries." In other words, just when the necessities of Azilia demanded a lottery, the laws against the practice were made more stringent.

There must have been conditions attached to Hill's purchase which were not fulfilled; for when Azilia reappears, it is Sir Robert's name that is still connected with the grant.⁴² To the dream of a Paradise on the mainland succeeded a vision, no less entrancing, of the Golden Islands—a vision seen by both Montgomery and Hill in the Bubble year. In October, 1720, shortly after the South Sea crash, appeared a pamphlet entitled, *A Description of the Golden Islands, with an Account of the Undertaking now on foot for making a Settlement there.*⁴³ The gentlemen concerned in the undertaking, declares the pamphlet, published these sheets to distinguish themselves from "that shadowy tribe of Nothings, now lately deceased"; and they have purposely delayed publication till this moment, "when nothing would choose to appear that could not depend on its stability. They never proposed to support their under-

⁴² Probably no complete purchase was effected. Sir Robert, in a temporary fit of discouragement, may have made some arrangements with Hill about the grant that gave Hill a greater interest in it than before, but did not go so far as an unconditional purchase. I have not found any letters or other documents that explain the situation more definitely.

⁴³ It was advertised in the *Post Boy*, October 22, 1720.

taking by the feeble arts of the Alley, having established it on so solid and lasting a foundation, that they have nothing to hope or fear from the rise and fall of opinions."

The pamphlet is doubtfully ascribed to Colonel John Barnwell, who was sent to England to secure from the Crown confirmation of the acts of the Convention that, in December, 1719, had overthrown the Proprietary government in South Carolina. He seems, however, to have assisted the Proprietors with information,⁴⁴ and in the pamphlet he asserts their right to make grants of land. Sir Robert's grant is quoted—with the judicious omission of the provision that a settlement must be made within three years;⁴⁵ and the new plan is outlined. On May 3, 1720, according to the account, Sir Robert sold the Golden Islands in 1,000 allotments of 100 acres each, at 20 shillings an acre; the land was conveyed to the purchasers in due form of law by a general indenture, but the money was not conveyed to Sir Robert—it was merely subject to call. The islands lay four or five miles off the coast of Azilia. "As to the four islands which you have assigned to the purchasers who are concerned in your settlement," writes Barnwell to Montgomery, from the Carolina Coffee House, "they are called St. Simon, Sapella, St. Caterina, and Ogeche, to which last before I came thence I left the name of Montgomery. You have given them a general denomination, which I think they may well deserve, of the Golden Islands, for as to convenient pasture, pleasant situation, profitable fishery and fowling, they surpass anything of that kind in all Carolina." The islands are safe from Indians; thousands of acres are already cleared; the

⁴⁴ See McCrady, *Hist. of South Carolina under the Proprietary Gov.*, 575.

⁴⁵ The Proprietors were probably willing to overlook the provision, for the sake of having the grant in the hands of persons friendly to their claims.

trustees are completing the arrangements to ship an expedition to make the first settlement on St. Caterina; the laborers are to be also the defenders of the colony. As an inducement to gentlemen in England and America to settle in the Golden Islands, the trustees offer free grants of land at a rental of one-fifth of the produce; and announce their intention of establishing a fund to buy all sorts of commodities from the planters at certain fixed prices. The Crown has granted a free entry for seven years to silk, wine, raisins, wax, almonds, oil, and olives.

Of this enterprise Hill was treasurer, if the authority of a pamphlet published some years later may be trusted.⁴⁶ The author, referring to Hill's record as a projector, says scornfully: "I own he may carry on such another trade as he did formerly, from his office in Scotland Yard, to the Margravate of Azilia, when he acted as Treasurer to the Golden Islands." The title has very pleasing fairyland suggestions. In a world of facts, the whole scheme was doomed to failure: its promoters trusted in lotteries at a moment when lotteries were frowned on by the authorities; they chose a year of unparalleled financial disaster for their final attempt; and they relied on the support of a proprietary government that had actually perished. Only a few weeks before their pamphlet appeared, a royal governor had been sent to South Carolina; and it required eight years for the satisfactory adjustment of the claims of the Proprietors themselves.⁴⁷ Hill greeted the successful colonization of Georgia in 1732 with a little "sally" of

⁴⁶ B. M. 8223, d. 44, 1-7 (1728).

⁴⁷ Even after the Proprietors had surrendered to the Crown, and the colony of Georgia was founded, certain persons who had subscribed to Montgomery's scheme in 1720 claimed land under his grant. Their contention that the grant was not void rested on a technicality. See *Col. of the Hist. Soc. of South Carolina*, II, 139.

verse; the "universal benevolence" of the trustees commanded his admiration.⁴⁸

It is difficult to believe that the business of the Golden Islands absorbed all of Hill's energy in the Bubble year. He may possibly have had some interest in several of the schemes that were brought to an end by the *scire facias* of the South Sea Company in August. One was for beech-oil—"Aaron Hill's project"—and others for making chinaware and for supplying London with coal.⁴⁹ He must surely have been one of the busiest members of the crowd in Exchange Alley; but beyond the connection of his name with beech-oil and the Golden Islands, I have found no record of his activity there.⁵⁰

It may be that in this year Hill first became interested in the company that offered him his next opportunity to be useful; his acquaintance with Colonel Horsey, one of its most prominent members, goes back at least to January, 1722. Probably he was compelled by impaired fortune, or by the discredit the failure of earlier projects had brought upon his individual enterprises, to play a subordinate rôle in those financed and managed by others. But subordinate as it was, none of his rôles was more picturesque than that of agent for the York Buildings Company, and no company of that time had a more curious and chequered career.

Incorporated in 1691 for the modest purpose of supplying the neighborhood of Piccadilly and St. James's with Thames water, the Governor and Company of Undertakers led a useful and respectable existence for nearly thirty

⁴⁸ Forster MSS. folio XVI. The poem is in his *Works*, 1753, IV, 152.

⁴⁹ Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*, III, 96.

⁵⁰ Carolina was in danger of being sold outright by its Proprietors for 250,000 pounds, to a joint-stock company, in June, 1720. The account is in McCrady, *Hist. of South Carolina*, etc., 669 f. The Carolinians were not pleased at the idea of being bought and sold in Exchange Alley.

years. Then, in 1719, a certain Mr. Case Billingsley,⁵¹ solicitor and projector, discovered the possibilities of a clause in their charter, empowering them to purchase lands; the great estates in Scotland and the north of England, forfeited by the rebels in the uprising of 1715, were for sale.⁵² Why not improve the water-works by the acquisition of land? In March, 1719, the water-works were on the market; in October, the stock was transferred to Mr. Billingsley, his partner, James Bradley, and others, for 7,000 pounds; and a few days later, a subscription was opened to raise a fund of 1,200,000 pounds to purchase forfeited and other estates in Great Britain. Subscribers were to receive annuities of some sort; for by an act passed in 1719, the purchasers of forfeited estates might grant rent charges or annuities to the extent of the yearly value. The whole amount was at once subscribed, and 59,575 pounds

⁵¹ Mr. Billingsley was credited with being the contriver of the Hamburg Lottery, which formed the subject of Parliamentary inquiry in 1723. He printed the tickets and kept them in the York Buildings House. Parliament resolved that it was an infamous and fraudulent undertaking. See Cobbett's *Parliamentary Hist. of Eng.*, VIII, 62 f. The *St. James's Journal*, March 9, 1723, notes that Mr. Case Billingsley has retired from Holland to remoter parts.

⁵² The government had had much trouble over these estates. When the thirteen Commissioners (among the six for Scotland was Sir Richard Steele) tried to take possession, they became involved in difficulties: claims made by creditors of the estates were used as blinds in the interest of the families of the rebels; many of the factors, nominated by the creditors and appointed by the Court of County Sessions, were in reality agents of the banished owners; claimants sprang up, with conveyances apparently executed before the rebellion in favor of minors; the Commissioners and the Lords of Sessions constantly disagreed. In 1717, the government passed a statute vesting the estates in the Commissioners to be sold at auction, and by 1719-1720 they were ready for sale. But there was little money in Scotland. In financial difficulties the age turned naturally to a joint-stock company for relief. Hence the opportunity of Mr. Case Billingsley.

added the next month; the ten-pound shares were soon selling at 305, and 10 per cent. dividends were promised. The purchase of estates, begun on October 6, 1719, continued into the following year, to the total amount of 308,913 pounds. When the South Sea Company secured its writ against the York Buildings Company and others (August 18, 1720), the stock fell from 300 to 200, and two days later had no buyers. The *Commentator* of September 5 jocularly explained that the company had not "broken in upon the true intent and meaning of their charter, who in the power of raising Thames water three story high, had, no question, a power to raise a bubble to 300 per cent. For bubble making in itself is a kind of water-work in its original." But the same paper, a week later,⁵³ removed the company from the list of bubbles, with apologies, having learned that on the threat of government proceedings it had returned to regular methods of raising money by call.

To follow in detail the history of the company for the next five years, until Hill comes into the story, is unnecessary.⁵⁴ Their financial transactions in London were as unsound as their management of the estates in Scotland was inefficient. One board of managers after another, infected with the evil principles of the Bubble year, gambled with the capital. Money was raised in all possible ways—by calls on the proprietors, transfers of nominal stock, and even lotteries;⁵⁵ and the only result was an annual shortage

⁵³ No. 73.

⁵⁴ A very interesting account, fully supplied with all the technical details of high finance in the eighteenth century, is that by David Murray, *The York Buildings Company: a Chapter in Scotch History*, Glasgow, 1883. Much of the material used here is taken from this book.

⁵⁵ Lotteries, all partial failures, were drawn in August, 1721, February, 1722, and in 1723. To give a deceitful appearance of value to the stock, seven half-yearly dividends were declared between 1721 and 1724, and paid out of the capital.

of four thousand pounds. Their Scotch estates, in Aberdeen, Perth, Forfar, Berwick, Stirling, and elsewhere, were almost totally uncultivated, and full of swamp and waste land; drainage was unknown; fertilizing nearly so; agricultural implements were primitive—wooden ploughs, for example, and wooden mallets for breaking clods; and the chief crops were bere and oats. Rentals were paid in kind,—in hens, butter, peas, meal, geese, and wool. Add to these primitive conditions on the estates the incredibly bad roads,⁵⁶ the unpopularity of the company (which inherited the prejudice against the Commissioners), and the debts upon all the estates (which the company also inherited), and it is evident that the chances of profit, even with the best of management, were small.

In spite of its difficulties, this task of managing extensive estates all over Scotland and Northumbria—not to mention that other duty of furnishing water to the inhabitants of the West End—did not afford sufficient outlet for the energies of the governor and his six assistants.⁵⁷ In 1727, Colonel Samuel Horsey, then governor, made a proposal for importing timber, masts, marble, and “other commodities of the natural growth of Scotland.”⁵⁸ The idea was not entirely new. Captain Edward Burt, writing about

⁵⁶ It took eight days to travel the 170 miles between Edinburgh and Ross-shire.

⁵⁷ An effort was made to improve the water-works: in 1725 a real fire-engine was installed—a very noisy and smoky one, according to a contemporary account—which proved too expensive, and was replaced after three years by horse-power. The account of the engine, *The York Buildings Dragon*, is reprinted in the appendix of T. Wright’s *England under the House of Hanover*, 1848.

⁵⁸ Colonel Horsey was waiting for the confirmation of his appointment by the Proprietors as governor of South Carolina. For two years or more (1725–1727), there is a record of delays, petitions, and memorials for and against the right of the Proprietors to appoint a governor. *Col. Hist. Soc. of South Carolina*, I, 172.

1729, says:⁵⁹ "I remember to have heard, a good while ago, that in the time when Prince George of Denmark was lord-high-admiral of England, some Scots gentlemen represented to him that Scotland could furnish the navy with as good timber for masts and other uses as either Sweden or Norway could do,"⁶⁰ and at a much more reasonable rate." Two surveyors were sent up at that time, and, after a narrow escape from hanging at the hands of a Highland chieftain who cared nothing for credentials from Prince George, they did survey the woods; but nothing further was done.

The real author of Colonel Horsey's proposal was Hill, who had found a place for Scotch timber in his poem to Harley in 1714. Even before the governor submitted the plan to the company, he had evidently come to some agreement with Hill: "Mr. Hill has finished his affair," wrote Savage to Mallet, on August 15, 1726,⁶¹ "and by disposing of it to a company, has secured a hundred thousand pounds for himself. On Friday was s'ennight he set out in his own coach and six to Scotland, with his wife, and his mother-in-law accompanied him in her chariot." The coach and six may be accepted on Savage's authority, but it is impossible that anyone—least of all Hill—could secure a hundred thousand pounds from the York Buildings Company. Another letter,⁶² in October, refers to Hill's arrival at Berwick, his intended tour, and halt at Inverness. The appearance of his coach probably made a sensation in Inver-

⁵⁹ *Letters*, 5th ed., II, 152. Burt was a surveyor and engineer, engaged in laying out roads in the Highlands—a work begun by Marshall Wade about 1726.

⁶⁰ The Tar Company of Sweden had practically a monopoly of ship supplies. Parliament, about 1704, tried with little success to encourage the making of tar, hemp, etc., in the Colonies. Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry*, etc., Part I, 485 f.

⁶¹ Quoted in G. C. Macaulay's *Thomson*, 18, note 1.

⁶² *Thomson to Hill*, October 20, 1726.

ness, where the tiny carts, drawn by diminutive horses, had wheels formed of three pieces of plank. "The description of these puny vehicles," wrote Captain Burt, "brings to my memory how I was entertained with the surprise and amusement of the common people in this town, when, in the year 1725, a chariot with six monstrous great horses arrived here by way of the seacoast. An elephant, publicly exposed in one of the streets of London, could not have excited greater admiration. One asked what the chariot was; another, who had seen the gentleman alight, told the first, with a sneer at his ignorance, it was a great cart to carry people in and such like."⁶³

During his visit of several months,⁶⁴ Hill did more than merely inspect the timber. "Is it not true," wrote a gentleman at Edinburgh in 1728,⁶⁵ "that Aaron Hill, Esq., with the advice, concurrence, and assistance not only of the company, but likewise of Messieurs John Essington and James Crisp of Wansworth, sent by a ship to Inverness all utensils for cutting and clearing of wood, with copper kettles and other things needful for boiling and extracting the salt out of the ashes, and came himself last year to our woods in the north, and having examined the same, did burn a considerable quantity of wood, in order to make Russian potash; and upon his failing to perform the same, gave out, contrary to all expectation, that our wood wanted salt. . . . By this imaginary project was there not a very considerable sum sunk?"

⁶³ *Letters*, I, 77.

⁶⁴ Hill was back in London in March, 1727; a letter from Thomson of March 4 refers to his return (*Col. of 1751*).

⁶⁵ "Letter from a gentleman at Edinburgh to his friend at London," B.M. 8223. d. 7. The Londoner had sent to his friend the *Daily Post* of November 21, 1727, which contained abstracts of the proceedings of the two general courts of the company, held in August and November, 1727, and had asked his opinion of the company.

Though the potash experiment failed, Hill was so delighted with the woods that he wrote to Colonel Horsey recommending the acquisition of the timber, and on his return to London urged it on him as a certain source of wealth. It was then that Horsey proposed it to the company. "But as Hill's name, it was thought, would not be acceptable to the shareholders, Thomas Fordyce and Mr. Adam, the Company's agents in Scotland, were put forward as the proposers."⁶⁶ According to the abstract of the governor's report to the general courts of the company, held in August and November, 1727,⁶⁷ the woods were capable of supplying the entire demand of the kingdom for great and small timber, even to masts for the first-rate ships of the navy; a hundred shiploads a year for twenty years might be taken from the famous Abernethy woods alone; and these woods were conveniently situated near the most navigable river in Scotland—the Spey. Best of all, the Admiralty was willing to buy from the company the masts and yards for the navy.⁶⁸ The result of these representations was that in January, 1728, sixty thousand fir trees were purchased.⁶⁹ To secure funds, the court determined

⁶⁶ Murray, *York Buildings Co.*, 57.

⁶⁷ B.M. 8223. d. 44.

⁶⁸ "As their Act of Parliament made no reference to importing masts and marble, the company solicited, and by a due expenditure in gratuities and presents obtained (August 21, 1728) a royal licence 'to trade in goods, wares, and merchandise of the growth and produce of that part of the kingdom.'" Murray, *York Buildings Co.*, 58. See also Macpherson, III, 145, under the year 1728: "A premium is also enacted for the importation of masts, yards, and bowsprits from Scotland, where . . . there are in sundry parts great store of pine and fir trees."

⁶⁹ The trees were purchased at the rate of 2/4 a tree; Francis Place, who surveyed the woods in April, 1733, said that 20,000 trees worth that price had been cut down, that 10,000 more still standing were of the same value, but the remaining 30,000 were worth no more

to revive 200,000 pounds of a nominal stock of 600,000 pounds, which had been annihilated by an earlier order of the court in 1725; and the proposers of the scheme were to have the privilege of taking this up at 10 per cent., to be paid for as fast as money was needed in the trade. The apportionment caused squabbling: Hill demanded 16,000 pounds; but “after claiming personally and ‘through one Mrs. Blunt,’ he agreed to take 8,000, in discharge of which he got 6,800 pounds stock of the company.”⁷⁰ This transaction is noticed by the questioning gentleman at Edinburgh already quoted: “Is it not true that 200,000 pounds stock was transferred by the company to one or two at London, and that he or they sold so much thereof as repaid what Mr. Hill’s friends had advanced for satisfying the company’s exigencies mentioned in the above-named second general court, and likewise for raising money to carry on the project of trees for masts?”

After this settlement, Hill set out once more for Scotland, probably in the spring of 1728, and was received with high honors. The Duke and Duchess of Gordon “distinguished him with great civilities,” and the magistrates of Inverness presented him with the freedom of the city “at an elegant entertainment made by them on that occasion.”⁷¹ On August 18, he wrote to his wife “from the Golden Groves of Abernethy”⁷² that he had everything settled to his satisfaction; “the shore of the Spey, for a mile or two together along our meadow, is all covered with masts, from fifty to seventy feet long, which they are daily bringing out of the wood, with ten carriages and above a hundred horses; and [they] bring down from forty to fifty trees a day, one day than /6 a tree (Murray, 57, quoted from the House of Commons Journals).

⁷⁰ Murray, *York Buildings Co.*, 63.

⁷¹ Cibber’s *Lives*, V, 265.

⁷² *Works*, 1754, I, 47 f.

with another. In the middle of the river lie at anchor a little float of our rafts, which are just putting off for Findhorn harbor; and it is one of the pleasantest sights possible to observe the little armies of men, women, and children, who pour down from the Highlands, to stare at what we have been doing. Colonel Horsey came hither, on Wednesday last, and is in such raptures at what he sees and hears, that he scarce knows whether he walks on his head or his heels.⁷³ The Highlanders had good reason to stare at Hill's operations, for they were without precedent in that region. The former owners of the woods had been accustomed to float their timber down in single logs or lots loosely huddled together, attended by men in a currach—a small wicker basket covered with ox-hides.⁷⁴ Rafting was unknown until Hill introduced it. “When the trees were by his order chained together into floats, the ignorant Highlanders refused to venture themselves on them down the river Spey, till he first went himself, to make them sensible there was no danger. . . . He found a great obstacle in the rocks, by which the river seemed impassable; but on these he ordered fires to be made, when by the lowness of the river they were most exposed, and then had quantities of water thrown upon them; which method being repeated, with the help of proper tools they were broken in pieces and thrown down, which made the passage easy for the floats.”⁷⁵ The

⁷³ The base of the timber operations was at Culnakyle, twenty-five miles up the Spey from Garmouth; the logs were floated down to Garmouth, and then conveyed by rafts to Findhorn, a little distance down the coast; there the ships loaded. The building of a new harbor was projected, because that of Findhorn was not safe, and the passage from Garmouth was hazardous. William Stephens, who was appointed agent for the company in December, 1728, and arrived at Culnakyle in April, 1729, corroborates several of the details in Hill's letter. See *The Castle Builder, or the History of William Stephens, etc.*, 1759, 60 f.

⁷⁴ Murray, *York Buildings Co.*, 60.

⁷⁵ Cibber's *Lives*, V, 265.

country people soon learned this new means of transport, and floated down the river with their butter, cheese, skins, and bark.

Towards the end of September, Hill was still in the Highlands. "Nothing should have prevailed with me to have spent so much time here," he wrote to his wife,⁷⁶ "but the glorious prospect of the company's certain advantage, and the fear I had, if anything should be left unregulated, that the silly malice of some wicked spirits in Exchange Alley would have made an ill use of it, to the stock's disadvantage." On the first of October, he set out on his return,⁷⁷ "having left everything in the north on the happiest and most flourishing foot in the world."⁷⁸ An unexpectedly long stay in the neighborhood of York, where his wife then was, "had like to have proved of unhappy consequence, by giving room for some, who imagined (as they wished) that he would not return, to be guilty of a breach of trust that aimed at the destruction of a great part of what he was worth; but they were disappointed."⁷⁹ Just what this breach of trust was is not explained.

How, meanwhile, was the enterprise regarded by others? Burt, an experienced engineer, doubted whether it would pay to remove the wood over bogs, precipices, and rocky rivers.⁸⁰ At the very time when Horsey was pictured by

⁷⁶ Sept. 20, 1728. *Works*, 1754, I, 50.

⁷⁷ Letter to his wife from Dundee, October 8, *Works*, 1754, I, 51.

⁷⁸ Hill left memorials of his visit on various window panes. Burt observed "at the first stage on this side Berwick, a good deal of scribbling upon a window"; among the lines were those of Hill on the weather in Scotland. "By the two initial letters of a name, I soon concluded it was your neighbor, Mr. Aaron Hill, but wondered at his manner of taking leave of this country, after he had been so exceedingly complaisant to it, when here, as to compare its subterraneous riches with those of Mexico." *Letters*, I, 181.

⁷⁹ Cibber's *Lives*, V, 265.

⁸⁰ *Letters*, I, 283.

Hill in a state of delirious rapture, a significant advertisement appeared in Mist's *Weekly Journal*⁸¹ of a company to be formed for furnishing naval stores from the plantations, "there being no likelihood of the York Builders doing it from Scotland," but this positive statement may have represented merely the wish of a rival projector. While Hill was yet in the country, the doubting Edinburgh gentleman expressed views at variance with Hill's:⁸² the harbor at Garmouth, he is told by a friend living on Spey-side, is dry at low tide and only six or seven feet deep at high tide, and is open to storms; after heavy rains, the current of the river is so rapid that trees cannot be stopped from rushing into the ocean; it required seven weeks to bring down sixty small trees to Garmouth, though over a score of men worked daily; "there is not one tree in their wood of proper dimensions for a bowsprit to a first-rate," and as for the harbor, it is indeed secure—"so secure that no ship that can stow trees can reach it, for sands, and shingles." This was probably among certain "lying papers" that Mrs. Hill told her husband about; he thanked her and added that the directors had sent him a dozen or more "such monstrous mixtures of folly, falsehood, and impudence; the magistrates of Edinburgh have thought fit to make a public example of some who distributed them in this country."⁸³ They may really have been malicious and at least partly false, for a specimen cargo that was cut and sent to London was reported, by the master mast-maker at Deptford, to be of excellent quality. But it was a fact that there were no trees fit for masts for first-rates; Hill unquestionably saw taller trees on Speyside than were really there.

Though William Stephens, the agent sent to Abernethy

⁸¹ August 24, 1728.

⁸² B.M. 8223. d. 44. 1-7.

⁸³ *Works*, 1754, I, 50.

at the end of 1728, developed the plank and deal board trade with some success, yet in four years the charges exceeded the returns by nearly 28,000 pounds. "Well might the Reverend Mr. John Grant, the parish minister, say of them: 'the most profuse and profligate set that ever were heard of in this corner. . . . This was said to be a stock-jobbing business. Their extravagancies of every kind ruined themselves and corrupted others. Their beginning was great indeed, with 120 working horses, waggons, elegant temporary wooden houses, saw-mills, iron-mills, and every kind of implement and apparatus of the best and most expensive sorts. They used to display their vanity by bonfires, tar-barrels, and opening hogsheads of brandy to the country people, by which five of them died in one night. They had a commissary for provisions and forage at a handsome salary, and in the end went off in debt to the proprietors of the country. But yet their coming . . . was beneficial in many respects, for besides the knowledge and skill which was aquired from them, they made many useful and lasting improvements.⁸⁴ They made roads through the woods. They erected proper saw-mills. They invented the construction of the raft as it is at present, and cut a passage through a rock in Spey, without which floating to any extent could never be attempted.' "⁸⁵ The death knell of the timber project was sounded in July, 1730, when the general court of the company, after considering Hill's claim to a part of the 200,000 pounds stock at 10 per cent. "as a reward for the timber scheme," resolved "that the timber scheme had not in any point answered the expectations of

⁸⁴ Hill tells his wife (*Works*, 1754, I, 53) that "Adam and Eve in the wilderness lay in just such houses as the Highlanders—only I believe they were not altogether so dirty."

⁸⁵ Murray, *York Buildings Co.*, 61; quoted from Old Stat. Acct., XIII, 133.

the company, from the character given by the proposers, and that they had no title to the stock.⁸⁶

A brief summary of the later career of the company—too interesting to be entirely passed over—will explain why Hill, who still had some share in the stock, was by turns hopeful of profit and dismally conscious of loss.⁸⁷ From timber the company turned to iron; by 1732, the debit on the enterprise was nearly 7,000 pounds. Their coal works and salt-pans at Tranent were equally unsuccessful; and their glass works resulted in a loss of over 4,000 pounds. They next tried lead and copper mining, and leased the mines at a ruinous rental from Sir Archibald Grant and others, who were interested in the "Charitable Corporation for the Relief of the Industrious Poor," which lent small sums upon pledges. Their interest for several years had taken the form of treating themselves as industrious poor, and borrowing the money of their Corporation on sham

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 63, note.

⁸⁷ See letter to Victor, April 9, 1733 (*Victor's Hist. of the Theatres*, II, 192): Hill states that he has 8,000 pounds in York Buildings Company bonds, though he could make only 3,000 if he were to sell them. In July, 1738, Colonel Horsey was appointed governor of South Carolina (*Col. Hist. Soc. of South Carolina*, II, 269). He had been turned out of the York Buildings Company in 1733, and sued by the company in 1735. Hill's letter to his daughter, of June 23, 1737 (*Works*, 1754, I, 335), refers to the South Carolina appointment as possible: "As soon as it is confirmed, . . . then Mr. Stanlake may go to him, and insist on an assignment from his salary for regular payment (not of the debt, for that he can't yet do) but of the current yearly interest. And let him, if he can, include the interest on my long arrears; for from 1729 to this day, I have received but 100 pounds upon the whole, instead of 75 pounds yearly, from the colonel." In a letter to Popple, September 15, 1740 (*Works*, 1753, II, 67) is another reference to Horsey: "What a lottery wheel is this world! we have seen it in the melancholy fate of our poor friend Col. Horsey. After twenty years unwearied pursuit of one flattering and favorite prospect, he had no sooner possessed it . . . than he died."

pledges, for purposes of speculation. When on the verge of ruin, they decided to lease their mines to the York Buildings Company, in the hope that the transaction would cause a rise in York stock, by which they could profit. The Corporation finally collapsed; there was a Parliamentary inquiry; and of course the York Builders reaped no benefit from the notoriety. The mines, developed with enthusiasm, were abandoned in 1740, having proved ruinous to shareholders, but beneficial to the country. On the whole, Scotland profited considerably from the operations of the company, but no one else did. The details of bond issues and reissues, of petitions of creditors, and of Parliamentary inquiries, up to the year 1740, when the company finally got into Chancery, may be read in David Murray's account. For fifty years more, there were proceedings in the Scotch and English courts; and when the estates were finally sold, they had doubled and trebled in value, through the improvements in agriculture. In 1818, only the old water-works were left, and these were closed by agreement with the New River Company, for an annuity. In 1829, Parliament dissolved the company, and divided the proceeds of the property among the stockholders. Thus, after a troubled and adventurous existence of a century and a half, the York Buildings Company ended as quietly and respectably as it had started, with all its debts ultimately discharged by the rise in the price of land.

Knowledge that the company would become solvent in the next century would probably have afforded slight consolation to Hill for his present losses and disappointments. But he could at least reflect with satisfaction, in his seclusion at Plaistow, that Highlanders were floating comfortably on their rafts down a navigable Spey; and to see their efforts result in immediate good to the country was given to few of the York Builders—their operations were directly

disastrous and only indirectly and remotely beneficial. Hill had now had enough of joint-stock enterprises and was ready to keep the resolution he had made prematurely in 1723,—to have done with all designs he could not execute himself.⁸⁸ Aside from his experiments with grapes and potash at Plaistow, he did not attempt to carry out any more of his ideas. Not that he ceased to conceive them! They were always ready for the consideration of those who would listen.

When *The Citizen, or the Weekly Conversation of a Society of London Merchants on Trade and other Public Affairs*, was started in February, 1739, Hill intended to become a contributor; but whether he really wrote any of the score of papers that were published is doubtful.⁸⁹ "I am ashame'd to have been so lazy a Correspondent with *The Citizen*," he wrote Richardson in April of that year;⁹⁰ "tho' it has not altogether proceeded from Laziness, but, chiefly, from a Desire to observe, from the Turn of a proper Number of Papers, in what Manner, and with what Choice of Subjects, Sir William wou'd incline to Distinguish his Purpose: that so, I might vary as little as possible from the General Aim of the Paper, in any of Those I shou'd send it. I perceive it seems fondest of Hints that relate to our Trade, and in particular to That of our American Colonies—and I believe I cou'd say many Things, that might be fit to be

⁸⁸ Hill to Victor, February 21, 1723. (Victor, *Hist. of the Theatres*, II, 171).

⁸⁹ They took up such subjects as the Spanish trade, the sugar trade, the Carolina boundary question, the smuggling of wool, the need of infirmaries and foundling hospitals, the designs of Russia, the decay of the drama, etc. The "Sir William" mentioned by Hill was perhaps Sir William Keith, who wrote a *History of Virginia* (London, 1738), at the instance of the Society for the Encouragement of Learning; Richardson was printer and James Thomson secretary of the Society.

⁹⁰ April 12, 1739. Forster MS.

read on those Subjects." War and armies, as well as trade, occupied his thoughts. He gave Lord Chesterfield the opportunity of stamping out a prevalent army disease by a very simple remedy;⁹¹ and he presented a Lord of the Admiralty with an ingenious scheme for blocking the coast against Spain.⁹² It is to be regretted that his "tract of new improvements in the art of war," a piece "very full of novelty," remained unpublished; in the form in which he intended to present it, it might have been worth reading: "Would it not be better," he asks Richardson, "instead of a dry dissertation on what *might* be done in arms, to present it to the entertained imagination as what *had already been*; laying the scene at some pretended time, in some imaginary country; and uniting, in a lively story, all the use, surprise, and pleasure of historical narration, filled with warlike and political events, of a new turn and species, to the active demonstration of a theory that else might pass for project only?"⁹³ He had by this time (1748) arrived at a fine contempt for the practical. "How preferable," he exclaims, "to whole lives of mill-horse rounds in practical contractions, an extended theory may be!"

Though the projecting spirit could exercise itself only in "obstinate meditation" during these last years of Hill's life, its triumph over sickness, repeated disappointments, and misfortune is impressive. It would be hard to find—among literary men, at least,—a more complete embodiment of that spirit than Hill. Steele had his Fish-pool scheme, Gay speculated in South Sea stock, and Bishop Berkeley planned a college in the Bermudas. But Hill's activity embraced the invention of machinery, the search

⁹¹ Hill to Chesterfield, *Works*, 1753, II, 321 (1747).

⁹² *Works*, II, 25.

⁹³ Hill to Richardson, November 2, 1748, Richardson's *Correspondence*, I, 130.

for new processes of manufacture, the attempt to establish new industries, in England and the colonies, the development of unused natural resources, and the founding of new settlements. He takes us from Exchange Alley, with all its stock-jobbing mysteries, to the Alatamaha, and from the Golden Islands to the Golden Groves. And to prove that he was no mere dreamer, we have the evidence of the melted rocks and the rafts in the Highlands. Into all these projects he threw the energy of an ordinary life-time, and yet they were only a part of his life. He ardently pursued literature in his leisure moments, and after each commercial disaster, he returned to the affairs of the stage. Before he tried to introduce a new kind of oil, he had really introduced Handel into England.

CHAPTER III

HILL AND THE STAGE

1709-1723

Of one niche in literary history Hill is secure: no account of 18th century tragedy is complete without a reference to his adaptations of Voltaire's plays. Had he done nothing else, however, than win this doubtful honor, his dramatic achievement would not merit a chapter to itself. No one willingly reads the tragedies of Hill's age; and few, except as a matter of duty, care to read much about them. But this period of the drama, far from noteworthy from the purely literary standpoint, was one of great interest in other ways: it saw the acting of Betterton and Mrs. Oldfield and Garrick; the development of opera and pantomime as rivals of comedy and tragedy; and the establishment by the Licensing Act of a theatrical monopoly that for more than a century exercised a profound influence on the history of the drama in England.

The questions discussed by men interested in the stage were curiously like those with which we are familiar today. We find the management of theatres denounced as incompetent and mercenary; the public taste condemned as depraved; and the popularity of vulgar farces and cheap musical entertainments interpreted by moralists and unsuccessful authors alike as a sure sign of the approaching moral degeneration of the race. Has tragedy really ceased to have any appeal for the general public? Should the public be supplied with what it likes, or what it ought to like? Should there be any censorship of the stage, and how

should it be exercised? Can a national theatre be established to encourage poetic drama, and managed by disinterested persons who will regard profit as a purely secondary consideration? Is opera in English possible? All these problems, essentially the same as they are today, in spite of their eighteenth century dress, faced the interested observer of theatrical conditions in Hill's time; and on all of them Hill had very definite opinions. Most of his opinions were voiced, with perhaps less energy, by his contemporaries, but a few are peculiarly his. Nor did he confine himself to vigorous expression of his ideas—he made repeated efforts to carry them out. He was not merely critic and adviser at large to actors, managers, playwrights, and the general public; he was himself author and manager. To follow his activity from 1709 to 1749 is to review almost every phase of the theatrical history of the period.

To make clear the situation in 1709 when Hill first entered the field, it is necessary to go back to 1662.¹ In that year Charles II granted two patents, one to Sir Thomas Killigrew for the King's Company at Drury-Lane, and the other to Sir William Davenant for the Duke's Company at Covent Garden; all other companies and theatres were suppressed. In 1682, both companies were so feeble that the king merged them; the salaries of actors were reduced, and shares in the patents were sold to speculators or assigned by the patentees to others. In 1690, the lawyer Christopher Rich secured Davenant's patent; but he made his management so irksome to a large number of his actors that led by the famous Betterton, they laid their grievances before the Lord Chamberlain and were granted a license, in 1695, under which they built by subscription the New Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. They had the support of Con-

¹ For the authorities used in this account of the history of the stage, see the Bibliography.

greve, who wrote *Love for Love* for the opening of their theatre, and who had a share in the company. But Rich held his own, with the aid of tumblers, buffoons, and singers, until his inexperienced actors (among whom was young Colley Cibber) grew sufficiently expert to threaten the prestige of Betterton's company. Then Betterton, too, had to resort to illegitimate attractions. In 1705, Vanbrugh opened an opera house in the Haymarket under the patronage of the Court, but the acoustics were bad, and the opera failed; he joined forces with Betterton, and under Betterton's license transferred the actors to the Haymarket; but nothing prospered, and he finally unloaded his burdens on a certain Owen McSwiney—apparently an under-manager of Rich's.

Rich, who was suspected of being behind the transaction, did not at once get control, however. There were other shareholders in his patent, who had come to regard it as such a hopeless investment that one of them, Sir Thomas Skipwith, gave his share in a jest to Colonel Brett. The latter happened to be an enterprising man, with some influence over the Lord Chamberlain; he forced himself into the management, and effected, about 1708, an agreement between the two companies, by which the Haymarket, managed by McSwiney, monopolized Italian opera, and Drury-Lane, managed by Rich and Brett, kept the plays. Skipwith, seeing a chance of profit, repented of his gift and took back his property. Rich, at last in complete control of the situation, resumed his tyrannical conduct, until he again drove his actors to revolt and brought upon himself in June, 1709, a silencing mandate. His theatre was closed, but his actors were permitted to engage with McSwiney at the Haymarket, where both plays and operas were performed. It is to be noted that not all of the actors were hostile to Rich, as Hill found out to his cost later. From

this date until 1714, the patent remained dormant in the hands of Rich.²

Then entered on the scene William Collier, M.P., who had interest at Court and a share in the sleeping patent. Advised that if a shareholder submitted to the Queen and waived all right in the patent the Queen would permit him to reopen Drury-Lane, he made his submission, secured a new lease from the landlord—for Rich held on to the lease as well as to the patent—and took forcible possession on November 22, 1709. The *Tatler* tells the story of Rich's ("Divito's") departure:³

"On the 22nd instant, a night of public rejoicing, the enemies of Divito made a largess to the people of faggots, tubs, and other combustible matter, which was erected into a bonfire before the palace. Plentiful cans were at the same time distributed among the dependencies of that principality; and the artful rival of Divito observing them prepared for enterprise, presented the lawful owner of the neighboring edifice, and showed his deputation under him. War immediately ensued upon the peaceful empire of Wit and the Muses; the Goths and Vandals sacking Rome did not threaten a more barbarous devastation of arts and sciences. But when they had forced their entrance, the experienced Divito had detached all his subjects and evacuated all his stores. The neighboring inhabitants report, that the refuse of Divito's followers marched off the night before disguised in magnificence; doorkeepers came out clad like cardinals, and scene-drawers like heathen gods. Divito himself was wrapped up in one of his black clouds, and left to the enemy nothing but an empty stage, full of trap-doors, known only to himself and his adherents." Ac-

² Rich had owned originally only about one-sixth of the patent; "yet by obstinate dishonesty, he succeeded in annexing the remainder." Cibber's *Apology*, ed. Lowe, II, 99, n. 1.

³ No. 99, November 26, 1709.

cordingly, when the theatre opened the next day, the actors were without properties or stage clothes. The players whom Rich had kept inactive—among them Booth, not yet famous,—came over to Collier; but they were secretly in Rich's interest.

Although Collier had successfully engineered this exciting transaction, he apparently felt his incapacity as stage manager. Just why Aaron Hill sought the post, or what arguments he used to persuade Collier of his fitness, is not clear. Perhaps his influential patrons, Peterborough especially, were in themselves an argument, and perhaps his schoolfellow Booth suggested the enterprise, just as he suggested the subject of Hill's first play. At all events, when Drury-Lane opened on November 23, 1709, with *Aurengezebe*, it was under the direction of Hill. His management lasted until June, 1710; its chief events were the production of his tragedy, *Elfrid*, and the trouble with his actors that brought it to a close.

On January 3, 1710, *Elfrid*, with a farce, also by Hill, called *The Walking Statue*, was performed, and afterwards acted five times with moderate success.⁴ The "first dramatic sally" of his youth, written in less than a fortnight, he later regarded as "an unpruned wilderness of fancy, with here and there a flower among the leaves."⁵ For all that, he tried to preserve the unities—more carefully, perhaps, as he says in the preface, than an English audience thinks needful. This is an interesting admission of the indifference of the public to those idols of the critics of the day—the unities. The play tells the story of Athelwold, who, sent to report to the Saxon king Edgar of the beauty of Elfrid,

⁴ In the preface to *Elfrid*, Hill thanks Steele for trying to persuade the actors at the Haymarket—Betterton and the old company were acting there under McSwiney's management—to put off the representation of his *Tender Husband* until after the production of *Elfrid*.

⁵ Preface to *Athelwold*, the revised play published in 1731.

falls so deeply in love with her that he secretly marries her himself, and tells the king that she is not worthy of his royal notice. The action begins with the unexpected arrival of the king at Athelwold's castle; Athelwold is forced to explain to Elfrid the deception he has practised, and to beg her to allow his less charming sister Ordelia to pose as his wife; Elfrid consents, but reluctantly—the thought of her narrow escape from the throne does not increase her love for her husband. The scheme works very well until one of Ordelia's two lovers—the villain—discovers that the king has taken a fancy to Ordelia; to divert the royal thoughts into another channel, he reveals the secret, and persuades Edgar, angry at the fraud and enraptured with a glimpse of Elfrid, to send Athelwold off that night on a mission and in his absence win his lady. But they reckoned without Athelwold's father's ghost, who forbids his journey and sends him trembling back, to arrive inopportunely just when his friend has despatched the villain, and the king is emerging from Elfrid's chamber. Athelwold starts to kill the king, but on the appearance of Elfrid makes her the victim instead; he is then slain by the king, who devotes the remaining lines of the play to a eulogy of his virtues.

Elfrid has the merits of comparative brevity and rapid action, but the characterization is slight. It is hard to resist picking at least one flower from the wilderness of fancy: "Peace and rest," says Athelwold to Elfrid,

"Are woman's gifts to man; when toils and cares
Have worn our weary souls, woman, dear woman,
Is nature's downy pillow of repose."⁶ (Act I.)

⁶ One other flower ought not to be overlooked:

"Women are much to blame who cloak their wishes,
Perverting modesty from nature's meaning;
Her end in that bright virtue was to join
To guiltless freedom artless innocence;

There are occasional good lines, however; such as these from Act II.

“They who fight men fight equal enemies;
But they who war with conscience meet such odds
They lose by victory.”

The little farce enjoyed a fair measure of success, and was revived half a dozen times during the next twelve years.⁷ It was probably, as Genest says, more amusing to watch than it is to read. In the dedication of *Elfrid* to the Marquis of Kent, Hill declared comedy to be the easiest way of pleasing; and perhaps one other play of the season—*Square Brainless, or Trick upon Trick*, performed April 27, 1710,—was an attempt to demonstrate the theory. The editor of the *Biographia Dramatica* states that it was written by Aaron Hill, never published, and damned on the very first night; but we see from Genest that it was acted three times. Hill put on many old plays during the season—those of Congreve, Farquhar, Dryden, Otway, and Shakespeare—and a few new ones besides his own. The most successful was Charles Shadwell’s *Fair Quaker of Deal*, which drew large crowds even during the trial of Sacheverell.⁸

There is a flattering picture of Hill’s management in an ode, “To Aaron Hill, Esq., upon his being appointed governor of the Royal Theatre,” published in the friendly

But modern ladies scarce find other use
For the new-moulded nymph, than to cloak nature”—

surely a novel use for a new-moulded nymph!

⁷ D.L. February 6, 1712; July 26, 1723. L.I.F. March 30, May 4, and May 10, 1720; February 13, 1721 (Genest). The plot is based on the various attempts of Sprightly, his man Toby, and Corporal Cuttem to get messages through to the fair Leonora, closely guarded by a half-blind and wholly foolish father, Sir Timothy Tough.

⁸ See Cibber’s *Apology*, ed. Lowe, II, 91, n. 2.

British Apollo, April 3, 1710.⁹ The theatre is bidden to lift up its head, for a mighty genius is now at the helm:

“A bard whose vast capacious soul
Hath innate force sufficient to control
The vain assaults of snarling crities, while
Beneath his auspices you sit and smile;
As these he awes, the rest his wit alarms,
While the fair sex are captivated by his charms.”

With such a director, the guilty stage shall be *reformed!*¹⁰

However effectively his innate force controlled the vain assaults of snarling critics, it failed to control the actors, incited to intrigue as they probably were by Rich, the silenced manager. Hill seems to have shared the management with seven of the principal actors; but towards the end of the season he became displeased with them and deposed them, to the satisfaction of the rest of the company, with the exception of Bickerstaff, Keene, Booth, and a few others. Booth was offered the post of manager of rehearsals, but he made the restoration of the seven a condition of his acceptance. Hill chose this critical moment to pay a visit to Essex—this was the year of his marriage with the daughter of Edmund Morris of Stratford in Essex—and left his unlucky brother as stage manager. For some neglect of duty, the brother exacted a fine from several of the players. What then happened may be quoted from the *New History of the English Stage*, by Percy H. Fitzgerald, who bases his account upon a letter written by Hill to Collier:¹¹

⁹ Vol. III, no. 3.

¹⁰ The number for April 24–26 contains another poem, in which we are assured that

“The Thespian car, triumphant, scours the plains.
Heroic warmth now strikes the enervate swains,
For Talbot holds the staff, and strenuous Hill the reins.”

¹¹ I, 309 f. The letter is in the possession of a private collector.

"They threw up all their parts, broke out into insubordination, and there were actually fears that they would seize on the house and carry off 'the cloaths.' Mr. Hill hurried up to town, and found all true, with this addition—that Mr. Bickerstaff had 'beaten a poor fellow blind for reproving him for speaking scurrilously of me,' and had actually pushed the manager off the stage. For this offence Mr. Hill suspended Bickerstaff and Keene, and when he remonstrated with the former and begged of him not to be 'misled by villains,' 'he went into defiant revolt, forced the printer to put his name in the bills, and told the manager that he did not value him nor any man alive, but himself was his own master. . . . Leigh, with an impudence unheard of, exceeded all things. He told me he would not only be a manager, when I was none, but would go down and act with Pinkethman in spite of the Lord Chamberlain or me.'¹² Booth with a thousand rascally invectives told me publicly that he and they would.' This foreboded an alarming state of things, and it showed to what lengths of insolence the players could proceed. Meanwhile Hill was receiving anonymous letters of warning that violence was intended, and took measures to protect his theatre. He told Stockdale, his deputy, not to open the doors for the performance until a 'guard of constables should arrive to keep the boxes' and protect him from being assaulted in the performance of his duty. But when he went down that night, he found a perfect riot going on. Booth, heading a mob, had burst in the doors, and rushed up the passages behind the scenes. Then followed a scandalous scene. With drawn swords the infuriated players rushed into the manager's office. He half drew his, and with difficulty forced his way out into the passages. 'Powell then shortened his sword to stab me in the back, but I was saved by a gentleman. Leigh struck my brother a dangerous blow on the head with a stick. All this was in the open, in the presence of a number of men and women who had come to see the play.' The hunted director rushed to the Lord Chamberlain, but unfor-

¹² Pinkethman was to set up a booth in Greenwich; he did open on June 15, and Powell and Leigh did play. See *Tatler*, no. 188, June 22, 1710, for a jocular notice of Pinkethman.

tunately could not find him. Returning to the theatre, he found all the regular doorkeepers replaced by men appointed by the actors, and he himself was refused admission.

“Mr. Rich was then seen to pass by, who was greeted with loud ‘hurrahs,’ his hands kissed rapturously, while Leigh saluted him: ‘God bless you, master! See, we are at work for you.’ The ‘cloaths’ of the theatre were not yet gone, but were to be sent off the following day, and Rich was to be invited to take possession. Hill declared that the ringleaders, Powell and Leigh, were to be taken into custody and silenced. . . . The whole was no doubt instigated by Rich, who seems to have been an intriguer of the first quality.”¹³

The *Tatler* had no doubt of Divito’s connection with the riot. In the number for July 1, 1710 (no. 193), old Downes the prompter is represented as giving a “notion of the present posture of the stage”: “A gentleman of the Inns of Court (Rich) and a deep intriguer had some time worked himself into the sole management and direction of the theatre. Nor is it less notorious that his restless ambition and subtle machinations did manifestly tend to the extirpation of the good old British actors, and the introduction of foreign pretenders; such as harlequins, French dancers, and Roman singers. . . . But his schemes were soon exposed, and the great ones that supported him withdrawing their favor, he made his exit, and remained for a season in obscurity. During this retreat, the Machiavelian was not idle, but secretly fomented divisions, and wrought over to his side some of the inferior actors, reserving a trap-door to himself, to which only he had a key.” But by these trap-door methods—whether figuratively or literally understood

¹³ “On 14th June, 1710, the Lord Chamberlain’s Records contain an entry which proves how rebellious the company were. Powell, Booth, Bickerstaff, Keen, and Leigh, are stated to have defied and beaten Aaron Hill, to have broken open the doors of the theatre, and made a riot generally. For this Powell is discharged and the others suspended.” Cibber’s *Apology*, ed. Lowe, II, 94, n. 1.

—Rich succeeded in doing little more than troubling Hill's peace. He did not gain possession of Drury-Lane, and was obliged to content himself with rebuilding the theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields,—a task that kept him harmlessly occupied until circumstances turned in his favor.¹⁴

After June 6, there are no more bills for that season at Drury-Lane. The Haymarket, meanwhile, with Cibber, Wilks, and Betterton (who died in May, 1710) directing the plays, and McSwiney the operas, was so prosperous that it excited the envy of Collier, distracted by the troubles at Drury-Lane; and he accordingly used his court influence to force McSwiney and his actor-partners to take Drury-Lane and give him the Haymarket and the opera. The bargain was completed in November, 1710.¹⁵ Knowing Hill's temperament, one is not at all surprised to find that he was so far from being dismayed by his spring's experiences that he was eager to try again. He had a fortune newly acquired by his marriage, and he had no difficulty in persuading Collier to "farm out" his "Musical Government," as Cibber expresses it, at a rent of 600 pounds a year.¹⁶

Hill's first enterprise as director of the opera was noteworthy. Handel, who had planned for some time to visit England, on the invitation of several English noblemen to whom he had become known at the Court of Hanover, arrived in London just at the opening of the opera season; and Hill, "hearing of the arrival of a master, the fame of

¹⁴ When John Rich opened the theatre in the fall of 1714, he succeeded in drawing several of the actors away from Drury-Lane, and among them were several of the rioters of 1710—still faithful to the house of Rich.

¹⁵ Collier was to be paid 200 pounds by the comedians, as a license for acting plays; and they were to give no plays on Wednesday, when that was an opera night. Cibber's *Apology*, II, 102, n. 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 105–106.

whose abilities had already penetrated into this country, applied to him to compose an opera."¹⁷ The result was *Rinaldo*, composed in a fortnight. Giacomo Rossi wrote the libretto, after a sketch supplied to him by Hill, and Hill translated it into English. The opera, put on with great splendor, February 24, 1711, was received with a degree of enthusiasm unprecedented in England, and ran until June of that year. To understand the significance of the event, something must be said of the history of the opera in England before Handel's arrival.

The death of Purcell had left England without any musical genius of her own. Before the close of the seventeenth century, the taste for Italian music had been shown by the popularity of a number of "consorts" by Italian singers.¹⁸ The first opera performed in the Italian manner was *Arsinoe*, an English version by Thomas Clayton of an opera sung at Bologna in 1677; it was presented at Drury-Lane in January, 1705, by English singers. Recitative was used for the narrative parts, and measured melody for the airs. According to Burney,¹⁹ the opera violated in every song the common rules of musical composition, as well as the prosody and accents of the language; "the English must have hungered and thirsted extremely after dramatic music at this time, to be attracted and amused by such trash." Bononcini's *Camilla* was given by English singers in 1706, and by a mixed company of Italian and English the next year. In 1707, Addison wrote the libretto for Clayton's *Rosamond*,—performed, much to Addison's chagrin, only three times. *Thomyris*, a pasticcio of works by Scarlotti and Bononcini, followed. A version of Scarlotti's *Pirro e Demetrio* introduced in 1708 the famous

¹⁷ Burney's *History of Music*, IV, 222.

¹⁸ Ibid., IV, 195.

¹⁹ Ibid., IV, 201.

Italian male soprano Nicolini.²⁰ The anonymous *Almahide* was the first opera sung throughout in Italian (January, 1710); Mancini's *Idaspe fedele*, with its much ridiculed lion,²¹ and Bononcini's *Etearco*, both sung entirely in Italian, complete the list of operas before Handel. "Opera had degenerated to such a degree," according to the *Oxford History of Music*, "that the time was ripe for the successful introduction of Italian opera under Handel."²²

Handel's work is said to represent the highest development of the opera of the past—to be the result of a successful evolution. As for *Rinaldo* itself, "it is agreed by all schools of later critics that its intrinsic beauties give it special claims to consideration. . . . From its historical as well as musical value, it would most probably be the work selected if any manager should be found enterprising enough to venture on a revival of one of Handel's operas on the modern stage."²³ The type to which *Rinaldo*²⁴ belongs was characterized by very definite conventions, governing the kind, number, and order of arias, and the number and kind of performers. There were usually three or four men, at least one of them an artificial soprano, and three women. There were five classes of arias.²⁵ The

²⁰ See *Tatler*, no. 115, for an appreciation of his powers as actor and singer.

²¹ See *Spectator*, no. 13.

²² IV, 191.

²³ *Oxford Hist. of Music*, IV, 207.

²⁴ The most famous air is the "Lascia ch'io pianga,"—Almirena's song on being taken captive by Armida (II, 4); Handel considered Rinaldo's "Cara sposa" (I, 7) the best air he ever wrote; "Il tricerbero umiliato" (II, 3), sung by Rinaldo, was long popular as a drinking song; the aria for Armida at the end of Act II had a harpsichord accompaniment played by Handel himself. See Rockstro, *Life of Handel*, 62 f.

²⁵ The *aria cantabile*, simple and sweet; the *aria di portamento*, a slow movement, more strongly marked in rhythm; the *aria di mezzo carattere*, with a richer accompaniment; the *aria parlante*, more declamatory; and the *aria di bravura*, a display piece.

opera was in three acts, and each artist sang at least one aria in each act; no performer was allowed two in succession. In the last two acts, both hero and heroine had a *scena*,—a recitative followed by a display aria; there was a grand duet and a lively chorus in conclusion. As the arias were written to show off certain voices, regardless of dramatic propriety, it is obvious that “the librettists were unable to treat their subjects in a worthy manner, and the composers cared little or nothing about suiting their music to the dramatic emotion of the words”;²⁶ “the result was to kill all individuality, and even so strong a nature as Handel’s own could not preserve his identity of style.”²⁷

No very inspired libretto could be written to suit such conventions as these, and the Italian and English verses of Rossi and Hill are quite as inane as those of some more modern librettos. The argument prefixed by Hill gives a sufficient idea of the story: “Godfrey, general of the Christian forces in the expedition against the Saracens, to engage the assistance of Rinaldo, a famous hero of those times, promises to give him his daughter Almirena, when the city of Jerusalem should fall into his hands. The Christians, with Rinaldo at their head, conquer Palestine, and besiege its king Argantes in that city. Armida, an Amazonian enchantress, in love with and beloved by Argantes, contrives by magic to entrap Rinaldo in an enchanted castle, whence, after much difficulty, being delivered by Godfrey, he returns to the army, takes Jerusalem, converts Argantes and Armida to the Christian faith, and marries Almirena, according to the promise of her father Godfrey.” The English version is in blank verse lines of irregular length, with lyric outbursts for the arias; such, for instance, as Almirena’s address to Rinaldo (I, 1):

²⁶ Arthur Elson, *A History of Opera*, 34, 1901. See also for characteristics outlined here the *Oxford Hist. of Music*, IV, 204–205; and W. S. Rockstro, *Life of Handel*, 62–63.

²⁷ *Oxford Hist. of Music*, IV, 202.

“ Go fight and succeed,
For each drop you shall bleed
Will increase the dear flame in my breast;
'Tis glory and fame
Win the generous dame,
And the conqueror's courtship is best.”

Or the song of mermaids—early Rhine maidens—dancing in the water (II, 3):

“ Your lovely May
Of life when gay,
Youth unheeding,
Counsel needing,
Pass away in love delighting”—etc.

Hill's aim, however, had been to produce, not a libretto full of poetry, but one with ample opportunity for scenic display. He had determined (as he informed the Queen in his dedication) to devote his little fortune to a trial “whether such a noble entertainment, in its due magnificence,” could fail “in a city the most capable of Europe both to relish and support it. . . . The deficiencies I found . . . in such Italian operas as have hitherto been introduced among us were: first, that they had been composed for tastes and voices different from those who were to sing and hear them on the English stage; and secondly, that wanting the machines and decorations, which bestow so great beauty on their appearance, they have been heard and seen to very considerable disadvantage.” He chose a subject that would afford scope to the music and fill the eye as well,—a story out of Tasso,²⁸ already used in opera in Europe; Handel

²⁸ Hill was interested in Tasso at this time. In the preface to *Elfrid*, he mentions him with enthusiasm and adds: “As a proof of the veneration I profess to his memory, I have attempted a translation of his Godfrey of Bulloign, and shall very suddenly publish a specimen and proposal for printing it by subscription.” He probably never carried the plan out, but may have utilized some of his material

did his part with the music, and Hill did his with the stage setting. And indeed, the scenic effects are impressive even to read about: Argantes rides in a triumphal car, drawn by white horses led by armed blackamoors; Armida appears in the air, in a chariot drawn by two huge dragons, out of whose mouths issue fire and smoke; a black cloud filled with dreadful monsters conceals Almirena and Armida, and then passes away, leaving two frightful furies to mock Rinaldo; a delightful garden in the enchanted palace contains a grove full of singing birds; "a mountain horribly steep," crowned by the blazing battlements of the enchanted castle, and guarded by rows of ugly spirits, opens to swallow the soldiers, "with thunder and lightning and amazing noises"; the crystal gate of the palace, struck by a magic wand, vanishes, the mountain disappears, and Godfrey and Eustatio find themselves on the side of a rock in mid-ocean.

All these wonders were heralded by the *British Apollo*. The number for December 15-18, 1710,²⁹ contains a poem in the form of question and answer, on the talked-of improvements at the Haymarket: the ear is to hear new voices from foreign parts, the eye to behold new beauties—

"Groves in natural forms appear,
While their inmates charm the ear.

.
Nay, machines, they say, will move
Glorious regions from above."

The reply confirms these rumors:

"The ruler of the stage, we find, (Aaron Hill, Esq.)
A youth of vast extended mind;
No disappointments can control
The emanations of his soul;

in the libretto. William Bond also was interested in Tasso. See ch. V for Bond.

²⁹ Vol. III, no. 115.

But through all lets will boldly run,
Unurbed, like th' horses of the sun"—etc.

The *Spectator*, on the other hand, was inclined to be contemptuous, but Addison's railleries were no doubt partly inspired by the memory of *Rosamond's* failure.³⁰ Mr. Spectator³¹ saw a man carrying a cage of birds, which he discovered were destined for the opera, to represent the singing birds in Act I, 1; the real singing was to be performed by the flageolets. The opera, he goes on, is an agreeable entertainment for the winter, filled as it is "with thunder and lightning, illuminations and fireworks; which the audience may look upon without catching cold, and indeed without much danger of being burnt; for there are several engines filled with water, and ready to play at a moment's warning." It is satisfactory to know that Hill's management did not neglect the necessary fire precautions. Addison makes fun of Rossi's Italian, and at his calling Handel the "Orpheus of our age"; says that it is no wonder the scenes are surprising, contrived as they are by two poets of different nations; belittles Tasso; and concludes by mentioning a treaty on foot to furnish *Rinaldo* with an orange grove and with tom-tits for song-birds. The libretto was legitimate game for Mr. Spectator, as the absurdities of the operatic convention continue to be for anyone who cares to dwell on them; but in selecting Handel as the butt of his ridicule, he was rather unfortunate. Hill could very well afford not to mind the *Spectator*.

Hill's emphasis on the machinery might lead one to think that his ideas of opera did not go very far beyond the spectacular. But that would be a mistake. He grew to recognize clearly enough the deficiencies of Italian opera, and began about 1725 to express the hope that "our

³⁰ See Burney, IV, 227.

³¹ See nos. 5, 18, and 29.

emasculating present taste of the Italian luxury and wantonness of music will give way to a more passionate and animated kind of opera, where not only the eye and ear may expect to be charmed, but the heart to be touched and transported.”³² He begged Handel,³³ just at the time when the latter was abandoning opera for oratorio, to let England owe to his genius “the establishment of music upon a foundation of good poetry; where the excellence of the sound should be no longer dishonored by the poorness of the sense it is chained to. My meaning is that you would be resolute enough to deliver us from our Italian bondage; and demonstrate that English is soft enough for opera, when composed by poets who know how to distinguish the sweetness of our tongue from the strength of it, where the last is less necessary. I am of opinion that male and female voices may be found in this kingdom, capable of everything that is requisite; and I am sure a species of dramatic opera might be invented that, by reconciling reason and dignity with music and fine machinery, would charm the ear and hold fast the heart together.” I dare say Hill would have been willing, as poet, to collaborate with Handel, though he refrained from saying so in this letter,—a mere note of acknowledgment for some complimentary tickets. He was in accord with many of his contemporaries in denouncing the wantonness and lack of reason of the Italian music; but unlike most of them, he had in his mind the ideal not only of dramatic opera—an ideal that did not begin to be realized until the production of Gluck’s *Orfeo*—but of dramatic opera in English—an ideal still very imperfectly realized.³⁴

³² *Plain Dealer*, no. 94.

³³ Letter of December 5, 1732, *Works*, I, 115.

³⁴ Of the two classes of people defined in the *Oxford Hist. of Music* (IV, 190), Hill apparently belonged to the first: “almost ever since the invention of opera, a ceaseless struggle has gone on between

Hill deserves all praise for engaging Handel to write his first composition in England, and for helping to make the venture successful. But with the ill-luck that overtook his plans even when his own judgment was not at fault, he was not allowed to reap the benefit of this operatic triumph. Collier was a restless and unreliable person in stage affairs—always dissatisfied with his own share, always envious of the success of others. He now resumed the management of the opera, for reasons rather vaguely indicated by the theatrical historians. According to Cibber, “before the season was ended (upon what occasion, if I could remember, it might not be material to say) he took it into his Hands again.”³⁵ And Dibdin’s account³⁶ is that when Collier found out that Hill’s management was bringing in considerable profit, he “somehow or other found out an informality in the agreement, and took the property back to himself before the season was over; while Hill, who was too wise or too powerless to contend with him, relinquished his right without murmuring.” Collier with his Tory influence seems to have been able to shift the pieces on the chess-board to suit his convenience. But this last move gave him no advantage. Handel returned to Hanover in the summer. The opera did not prosper the next season, and Collier cast longing eyes at the theatre. Early in 1712, poor McSwiney had the opera, in a sinking condition, thrown back upon his hands; and he became so involved that in January 1713, he was forced to leave the country for twenty years. Collier secured a new license for himself, Wilks, Cibber, and Dogget, and presently left the those who regard it as an ideal means of stirring human emotion by the dramatic representation of great deeds or tragic motives, and those who look upon it as an expensive amusement, a vehicle for personal display, or a means of ostentation.”

³⁵ *Apology*, II, 105–106.

³⁶ *Stage*, IV, 387.

management to the actors for a consideration of 700 pounds a year.

Until 1716, Hill was fully occupied with his beech-oil. Meanwhile, the accession of George I (1714) had had several interesting effects on the theatrical situation: "on the change of the ministry, Collier became a nonentity;³⁷ the actors easily brought about his removal; and knowing that some one would demand his pension, they selected Steele to be his successor, because of his influence with the new government and his well-known friendliness to the stage. In October, 1714, Steele secured a new license for himself, Wilks, Cibber, and Booth (whose success in *Cato* had brought him into the management), and converted this a few months later into a patent for his life-time and three years after. "Divito" the intriguer had no difficulty in getting the order of silence withdrawn, but his death soon afterwards left it to his son, John Rich, to open Lincoln's-Inn-Fields in December, 1714.

Hill turned again to tragedy after the beech-mast failure. Possibly the complicated and dismal plot of *The Fatal Vision, or the Fall of Siam*, reflects his state of mind at this time. The new manager accepted the play, and it had its first performance at Lincoln's-Inn-Fields theatre on February 7, 1716, and its seventh and last on March 6. At this time, practically no new tragedies were being produced at either theatre, though new farces and comedies appeared occasionally among the stock plays of Vanbrugh, Congreve, Shadwell, Wycherley, and Farquhar; Rowe, Southerne, Otway, Lee, Dryden, and Shakespeare satisfied the demand for tragedy. This was a state of affairs far from satisfactory to one who was himself a playwright, and Hill's opinion about this and other matters appears in the dedication of the play to Dennis and Gildon. He writes, he says,

³⁷ Genest, II, 545.

only for pleasure and to display his ideas; he is already convinced of the stupidity of the modern audience, and yet he scarcely blames them for their failure to be moved by the "affected, vicious and unnatural tone of voice, so common on our stages." How can passion be expressed by indiscriminate ranting? If in one man could be united Mr. Cibber's assurance, Mr. Wilks's brisk and lively spirit and soft address, Mr. Keene's majesty, and Mr. Booth's sweet voice and just accent,³⁸ there would be some hope for authors. In *The Fatal Vision* Hill tried, according to his own account, to reconcile the ancient and the modern types: he wished to be as regular as the French and observe the rules with "all the necessary strictness," and as lively as the Elizabethans—that is, "indulge the common taste for fulness of design." He thinks it the first endeavor of the kind; and so perhaps it was, though attempts to confine Shakespeare within the rules had been going on for some time. The result in a new tragedy is even more astonishing than in the Shakespearean alterations. *The Fatal Vision* is built, declares its author, "upon the most variety of turns, and has a deeper and more surprising plot than any play which has been published, that I know of, in the English tongue"; and he has found room, too, for "topical reflection, large description, love, war, show, and passion." Why need order confine the range of a poet's fancy? China offered a fruitful field for the wandering of his fancy, because our ideas of it are so dark, and it is so remote from present fashions.

The plot must be read to be appreciated—no summary can do it justice. There is an emperor of China, his two sons, a captive princess of Siam, a captive general of Siam in love (as are both the Chinese princes) with the princess;

³⁸ Hill evidently bore Booth no malice for his part in the 1710 riot; they were the best of friends in later life.

there is Selim, the emperor's eunuch, who in Act II is discovered to be the long since banished empress—banished because of a prophecy that she would bear a third son who would kill his father; the captive general turns out to be this third son. Through a misunderstanding too complicated to explain briefly, the emperor suspects the two princes of treachery, and dooms them to death; the eunuch and the Siamese general (or the empress and her son) plan to rescue them, and to that end turn loose the captive Siamese soldiery, who, ignorant of the family secrets, not unnaturally take the opportunity to kill off the Chinese royal family, leaving the third son and the princess to marry and occupy the two thrones. For "large description," we have an account by the princes of the defeat of Siam—where "mingling deaths effaced the flowery sweetness of the plain"; and one in Act III of a storm and shipwreck; an elephant who took part in the battle does not deserve to be forgotten:

"the roused elephant
Rears his huge trunk for battle; grins with wrath,
And inly ruminates the promised ruin."

Is there another elephant like that? For the vehicle of topical reflection, there is a hermit, whom the captive princess discovers reading and soliloquizing about Alexander the Great—a fruitful theme for meditation. Surely the "common taste for fulness of design" ought to have been gratified by *The Fatal Vision*.

Another period of absorption in commercial projects followed, and it was not until the beginning of 1721 that Hill's attention turned once more to the stage. His motive in writing his next play was purely philanthropic. A Scotch friend of his, Joseph Mitchell the poet, was in distress; and Hill, probably unable to assist him with money, wrote *The Fatal Extravagance*, permitted Mitchell to call

himself the author, had the play put on at Lincoln's-Inn-Fields (April 12, 1721),³⁹ and supported it on the supposed author's third night.⁴⁰ It was afterwards included in Hill's *Dramatic Works*. The preface, written in Mitchell's name, states that Shakespeare's *Yorkshire Tragedy*, which furnished the hint for the play, was put into his hands by his "good friend, Mr. Hill, to whom I take this occasion of expressing my gratitude in the most public manner I can. . . . I owe much in the scheme, in the sentiments, and language of this piece to the direction of that accomplished gentleman." This is a virtual admission of Hill's authorship.⁴¹ Later, Mitchell made the play in a manner his own, "improving" it into five acts by the addition of several new characters and episodes. The additions are not an improvement; the one-act play is, as the author of the sketch in Cibber's *Lives* says,⁴² one of Hill's best. "I know not if Mr. Hill has anywhere touched the passions with so great a mastery."

The play belongs in the class of domestic tragedies, and took its inspiration from the South Sea frenzy.⁴³ Hill, in the prologue, proclaims how unworthy of compassion are the "rants of ruined Kings":

"Empires o'erturned, and heroes held in chains,
Alarm the mind, but give the heart no pains.

³⁹ The play was performed at L.I.F. April 22, 1721; January 11, 1722; May 2, 1723; February 21, 1730; at Dublin in 1721; and at Covent Garden, for Mitchell's benefit, November 25, 1734.

⁴⁰ Victor's *Hist. of Theatres*, II, 123; Cibber's *Lives*, IV, 349.

⁴¹ It is said that Mitchell undid the world, and made known the real author of the play, and that he took "every proper occasion to express his gratitude and celebrate his patron."

⁴² IV, 349.

⁴³ According to the prologue written on the revival of the play in 1729.

Not so, when from such passions as our own,
Some favorite folly's dreadful fate is shown."

Bellmour, addicted to gambling, loses his entire fortune and that of his friend in speculation. When the play opens, he hears of his friend's arrest for debt, and is soon forced himself to face the cruel creditor, Barginave. Finding entreaties useless, and maddened by Barginave's taunts, Bellmour forces him to a duel and kills him. Urged by his wife to escape, he walks apart for a moment to consider, but decides instead to kill himself, his wife, and children, justifying his dreadful resolve by various desperate arguments.⁴⁴ The wife and children, in their ignorance, drink the cordial he prepares for them; he then undeceives her, and kills himself. Courtney, the uncle, however, had seen the fatal cup, suspected poison, and substituted some harmless drink. News of a bequest that will keep his family from want cheers Bellmour's last moments. The action is rapid and the play readable.⁴⁵ Mitchell said in the preface to the fourth edition that it "took," and Mallet wrote to

⁴⁴ Such as, "He who beggars his posterity begets a race to curse him."

⁴⁵ The scene where Bellmour tells his wife of his resolve to take the journey she has urged upon him is effective, with its touch of dramatic irony:

- B. "I have bethought me of a means to evade
The malice of my fortune. 'Twill be a journey
A little longer than thy love could wish it,
Yet not so far but we shall meet again.
- L. "O, be the distance wide as pole from pole,
Let me but follow thee and I am blessed.
- B. "It shall be so, Louisa.
- L. "A thousand angels
Spread their wings o'er thee, and protect thy steps.
Now thou art kind!—But the dear little ones,
Shall they go too?
- B. "All! All! shall go!"

Ker that it was acted with a great deal of applause.⁴⁶ So it must have achieved its end in relieving the poet's necessities.

The success of this play probably brightened Hill's views on theatrical affairs, which were just then entering upon a new phase. In January, 1720, the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Chamberlain, had closed Drury-Lane, to punish Steele for the stand he had taken on the Peerage Bill,—a stand opposed to that of most of his party. Of course, the ostensible reason for the action of the Lord Chamberlain had nothing to do with polities. Steele remonstrated, but was forbidden to write or speak to Newcastle. He stated his case in the *Theatre*, of which the first number came out on January 2, 1720; and in its columns, and in the pamphlets written against him, the question of the validity of the Lord Chamberlain's action in overriding the patent was discussed. Steele claimed that his patent was a freehold, and quoted legal authorities, but to no purpose. The actors themselves submitted, and received a license to play, but Steele was not restored to his place as controller until the friendly Walpole became Chancellor of the Exchequer in May, 1721.⁴⁷ The point of interest in this dispute was its effect on the theatrical monopoly. The Crown had not hesitated in Rich's case and in Steele's to disregard patent rights, and issue licenses or silencing orders as it saw fit. Of the patentees, Steele alone seriously questioned the Crown's prerogative, and he had been conspicuously defeated. The result was the rise, between 1720 and 1737, of unlicensed minor theatres: patent rights were regarded as inferior to the authority of managers, and private speculation was stimulated by the prosperity of Drury-Lane.

⁴⁶ September 3, 1721.

⁴⁷ See Aitken's *Life of Steele*, II, 221 f. On December 19, 1719, Cibber was forbidden to act, and various explanations were given of his offence.

“Within a decade after 1720, London boasted half a dozen theatres, and every street had its theatrical booth where performances similar to those at the other theatres might be seen.”⁴⁸ The two unlicensed theatres that became most famous were the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, the scene of the production of Fielding’s farces, and Goodman’s Fields, where in 1741 Garrick made his first London appearance.

Among the first to appreciate the opportunity apparently offered to open a theatre without a patent was Hill. In 1720, the Little Theatre in the Haymarket was built as a speculation by one Potter, a carpenter, who relied on its being hired for dramatic exhibitions.⁴⁹ On December 29, 1720, a newspaper advertisement announced the opening of the house with “*La Fille à la mode, ou le Badaud de Paris*,” “under the patronage of a distinguished nobleman, the company calling themselves ‘the French Comedians of his Grace the Duke of Montague.’”⁵⁰ This French speculation languished and on May 4, 1721, came to an end. Very shortly afterwards, Hill must have begun to get a company together. Rich remonstrated and quoted his patent privileges, but Hill replied⁵¹ that his pretence to exclusive power reminded him of “a poor merry fellow, who used to sleep when he was hungry, in hopes to dream of a surfeit.” He was, however, willing to compromise: “I suppose you know that the Duke of Montague and I have agreed, and that I am to have that house half the week, and his French vermin the other half; but I would forbear acting at all there this

⁴⁸ Nicholson, *Struggle for a Free Stage*, etc., 21.

⁴⁹ Genest, III, 159. Genest’s first bill is dated December 12, 1723.

⁵⁰ H. Barton Baker, *The London Stage*, I, 173–174. Fitzgerald, *New Hist. of the Eng. Stage*, II, 98–99, notes an advertisement of December 15, 1720, announcing the expected arrival of the French company.

⁵¹ September 9, 1721, *Works*, II, 46 f.

season, if you will let me your house for two nights a week in Lent, and three a week after. On all those nights I will pay full actual charge of your company and my own, and either give you a sum certain, or share the remainder with you. I will use your music, your doorkeepers, etc. But the players, the scenes, and the clothes shall be my own. . . . My own company's affairs permit me not to wait long for an answer."

The rest of the story is told in several long letters that Hill wrote to the Duke of Montague in January, 1722.⁵² It seems that the new company was then ready to open at the Little Theatre, to act English tragedy—a design in which Colonel Horsey and some other gentlemen were concerned with Hill. But the Duke's Frenchmen had come back. "Before the Frenchmen came over," Hill tells his Grace, "I made an absolute agreement with Mr. Potter for the House, and undertook to pay him 540 pounds for two seasons. And when he first talked with me of the French Actors' design to come over, I consented, on condition they should act there but ten nights, and take all those nights within the month of November. Now, they came not only much later than they agreed, but have greatly exceeded their number of nights already. And the English Company being now ready for opening, I have warned them that they can have liberty to act at that House no longer than Tuesday next. But they may certainly get permission to act two or three times a week at the Opera House." He would not have mentioned the matter to his Grace, but for the fact that the Frenchmen used his name as their encourager and patron; and he appeals to the justice of his Grace in this difficulty. His Grace, who is said to have been a man of some talent but with much of the buffoon about

⁵² Hist. MS. Comm., IX, 369-370. The dates of Hill's letters are January 20, January 21, and January 24.

him, has gone down to history as the author of a famous hoax on the public at the Haymarket Theatre in 1749.⁵³ Hill was apparently the victim of one of the Duke's jokes, for he wrote the next day: "I am sorry, my Lord, to discern, by the turn of your Grace's letter, that there is some very great mistake, which from a person of your good-nature, humanity, and love of justice, could occasion me a treatment so undeserved. . . . I writ to you in mere respect, because the French used your name. I was far from even supposing it true that you knew anything of them—much less that they were your servants. And so little did I dream that the House itself was your Grace's, that in my covenant with Potter, I agreed that all the rent which the French Players should pay till I was ready to open, and what he should weekly receive afterwards from me, should be . . . in discharge of a sum which he told me you had promised to see paid, if the old French Company did not pay it." Thus his bargain with Potter seemed to be really to the Duke's advantage. He begs the Duke to inform him if there is anything "dark" in Potter's proceedings. "Again, therefore, I must earnestly entreat your Grace to reflect on the resolution you are taking to refuse me admission to the House, after a very great expense of money and time for making and painting entire new sets of scenes, and clothes, all which are now ready, as also in getting together an entire new Company of actors, fit for Tragedy, most of whom . . . are persons of some character and distinction, and at least a better company than either of the old ones. . . . It is a daily and intolerable loss which I am kept at, unless your Grace shall be so good as to change your resolution. For, whatever right the law may give me, I know not; but I am sure I shall never put that to the trial, if I

⁵³ See Baker, *The London Stage*, I, 183. The audience was so angry at the hoax that it nearly broke up the theatre.

must have your Grace for my enemy.” He suggests an arrangement with the French players, and even offers to pay part of their rent at the Opera House.

His Grace’s reply filled Hill with amazement: “I must acknowledge that you have done nothing for support of the poor Frenchmen but what your honour and your charity obliged you to. All I could wish to have been otherwise is, that my reputation had stood so well in your Grace’s opinion as to have merited this notice before you took those measures, which have made much noise in Town, and which I should then have made unnecessary.” To the Duke’s suggestion that Hill try the Opera House, Hill points out that he has had scenery painted—“after a model perfectly out of the general road of scenery”—that fits only the stage of the Little Theatre. He begs the privilege, in case he can make no arrangement at the other house, of having the use of the Haymarket on certain nights; he will not interfere with the French; “and when your Grace shall acquaint them how Potter’s double-dealing has been the occasion of all this, they will no longer mistake me for an enemy; I will take particular care that they are used with all possible civility.”

But evidently the double-dealing carpenter and the merry Duke did nothing to help Hill out, and the scheme fell through.

Probably his alteration of *Henry V*, for which he had had new scenery painted, was the tragedy Hill had ready for his company; but when it was produced (December 5, 1723), it was under the protection of the patent at Drury-Lane, with Booth and Mrs. Oldfield in the leading rôles. *Henry V* had not been acted since the Restoration, although the comic scenes had been worked up into a farce, under the title of *Half-Pay Officers*.⁵⁴ One can foretell with some

⁵⁴ Produced at L.I.F. January 11, 1720 (Genest).

accuracy what 18th century adapters will cut out of a Shakespearean play; but only a genius akin to their own can conceive what they will put in. So, although we might expect Hill to omit Fluellen, Gower, Pistol and the rest, and even parts of the Princess Katherine's conversation with Alice, nothing can prepare us for the appearance of a lady once betrayed by the king, the revengeful Harriet, who roams about the camp disguised as a page, acts as emissary between the English conspirators and the Dauphin, assumes the rôle of Viola in an interview with Katherine (when she speaks of her own case as that of her sister), and is finally so touched by Henry's platitudes about his undiminished love and his kingly responsibilities that she reveals the conspiracy and then stabs herself.⁵⁵ Henry's youthful follies, in this lady's account, assume startling proportions: his time has been spent, not in tavern-drinking and playing practical jokes on Falstaff, but in working devastation among the maidens of England—he has ruined "countless crowds of beauties." When Harriet first appears, her uncle, Lord Scroop, urges her to be reasonable; "reason?" she cries, "I detest it!"

"Calm? No—let cottage fools with helpless sighs
 Bewail their ruined innocence. My soul,
 Full charged with hate and pride, breaks out in passion,
 Bold as my wrongs and dreadful as my purpose."

The "gentle Harriet" talks in this strain all the time. Hill's Katherine bears no resemblance to Shakespeare's,—she is, of course, much more refined. Hill represents her as

⁵⁵ The platitudes are to this effect:

"Still I regard thee with the same desires,
 Gaze with the same transporting pleasure on thee,
 As when our bounding souls first flew together,
 And mingled raptures in consenting softness.
 But kings must have no wishes for themselves"—etc.

already in love with a mysterious stranger, whose addresses and unnamed perfections had charmed her listening soul a year before; this turns out to be Henry—her high-beating heart recognizes his voice immediately. There is a delightful novelty in Act V: the battle, in approved French style, takes place behind the scenes, and is recounted to the audience by the Genius of England, who arises suddenly during the noise of drums and trumpets and sings:

“Look! behold! the marching lines!
See, the dreadful battle joins!
Hark! like two seas the shouting armies meet!
Echoing hills the shock repeat,” etc.⁵⁶

In cutting out the comic parts of serious pieces and dropping “low” characters, Hill illustrates the attitude of

⁵⁶ The unities are preserved by confining the action entirely to France—the conspiracy as well as the siege of Harfleur and the battle of Agincourt. Scenes are joined together: II, 4, and III, 5, in Shakespeare form part of Hill’s II, 1; and Shakespeare’s V, 2, is included in Hill’s III; Hill retains the boasting scene between the Dauphin and his friends—it introduces Act V (Shakespeare’s III, 7). In combining and transferring speeches, in altering good lines, and in omitting the best, Hill ranks well with his predecessors. The speeches of the Chorus are distributed among the other characters; Exeter’s account of the deaths of Suffolk and York is retained in part, with (it is almost needless to say) the omission of its most beautiful line—“Tarry, sweet soul, for mine; then fly abreast.” Hill’s crowning achievement is to put into Katherine’s mouth Henry’s soliloquy on ceremony (IV, I. Katherine’s speech is in Act II). Nothing Hill did, however, is worse than Otway’s mangling of Romeo’s speech—“It was the lark, and not the nightingale,”—in his *Caius Marius*.—To see what Hill’s princess is like, read her speech on being told the interests of France demand her marriage with Henry:

“Sooner than stoop to this, were mine the sceptre,
I would turn Amazon—my softness hid
In glittering steel, and my plumed helmet nodding
With terrible adornment, I would meet
This Henry with a flame more fierce than love.”

all the uninspired Shakespearean adapters of the age.⁵⁷ They all thought they were acting in the interests of art; they all desired to reveal Shakespeare's greatness.⁵⁸ And to introduce a love story, if there were none, or to add another, if there were not enough, was a common practice with them. Tate patched up a love affair between Edgar and Cordelia in *Lear*, and as late as 1771, Cumberland supplied Timon with a daughter, courted by Alcibiades. Hill's *Harriet*, therefore, is one of a goodly company. But the public did not take kindly to this particular alteration. Booth tried to explain their indifference by their disposition to look upon *Henry V*, not as a new play, but merely as a play altered from Shakespeare—not an unreasonable point of view, surely. "The many beauties you have improved from him," Booth remarks,⁵⁹ "and some noted speeches you have made use of with no very material alteration . . . have possessed the gross imaginations of the audience that most of the fine passages of your own are his too. . . . This I have found from some whose education, understanding, and acquaintance . . . might have taught them better; and yet their knowing his manner of writing so well, perhaps, might the sooner lead them into the mistake." Booth is absolutely of the opinion, however, "that

⁵⁷ Genest says that Hill had taken a hint from Orrery's *Henry V*. The only possible hint is Orrery's use of the name Tudor to designate the lover whom Katherine had seen a year before; but in Orrery's play, he is a real person, and a rival of Henry's—not Henry himself in disguise. Orrery's play, which is in rhyme, has scarcely any resemblance to Shakespeare's. See *Dramatic Works of Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery*, etc., I. London, 1739.

⁵⁸ "Not a single one of these adapters, even the very wretchedest of them, doubted for a moment that his work was a decided improvement upon the original." Lounsbury, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, 293.

⁵⁹ Letter from Booth to Hill, dated "Sunday morning," in the Col. of 1751.

after it has slept some time, it will appear again upon the stage, with a much better grace, and continue in the stock in the first form of tragedy forever.”⁶⁰

The production occasioned a little bickering in two of the periodicals—*Pasquin* and the *True Briton*. The *Pasquin* correspondent⁶¹ is firmly of the opinion that Shakespeare’s soul has “transmigrated” to Hill; and a writer in the *True Briton* of December 13 is amazed at Harriet’s failure to affect the ladies: “To what must we impute it that the sex most concerned in this incident of the play, seemed so little to be touched by it!” Few in that day would have thought of imputing it to the innate good-sense of the sex. All this praise was treated with scorn by “Menander,” in the *Pasquin* of December 20. The *True Briton* had admired a passage in Hill’s play about the unbusied shepherd’s having a pleasanter time than the king: the expression, says “Menander,” is vastly labored and distorted to disguise, if possible, the obviousness of the sentiment; of course a hawthorne shade is sweeter than a canopy, even if the latter were not shaken by treason—it only teaches us “that it is better to be safe in a cellar than blown up in a drawing-room.” He contrasts the old Harry’s way of making love with the new one’s, much to the latter’s disadvantage. Hill was much hurt at this attempt to “justify the grossest mixture of insult and rusticity in a speech of Shakespeare’s Harry to the Princess of France”; and he reflected, in typical eighteenth century fashion, that the men who injure Shakespeare most are his admirers, who make no distinction between his errors and his excellences.⁶² And so we may

⁶⁰ The play was performed six times (Genest).

⁶¹ December 3, 1723.

⁶² See letter to the “reputed author of *Pasquin*,” in *Works*, II, 130. The editor of Hill’s letters confused the periodical with Fielding’s play of *Pasquin*, and represents the letter as addressed to Fielding.

leave *Henry V* to await the resurrection prophesied by Booth.⁶³

⁶³ "Menander," whose sense commands one's respect, unfortunately mistook the strawberry and nettle passage for one of Hill's additions, and thus laid himself open to the *True Briton's* retort of not knowing the difference between Shakespeare and Hill.

CHAPTER IV

HILL AND THE STAGE (*Continued*)

1723-1749

Hill's own idea of the reason for the failure of his *Henry V* introduces us to a new and important dramatic development. "There is a kind of dumb drama," exclaims Hill, "a new and wonderful discovery! that places the wit in the heels! and the experience of both our theatres might have taught any writer but so dull a one as I am, that the Harlequins are gentlemen of better interest than the Harrys."¹ Harlequin and Scaramouche were familiar to Londoners even in Restoration days, for a company of Italians visited London in 1673, and there are various allusions to Arlequin before the eighteenth century. In 1702, John Weaver arranged a pantomime, often acted by Rich, called *The Cheats of Scapin*,—"an entertainment of dancing, action, and motion only"; and he also arranged pantomimes—*Mars and Venus*, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, and *Cupid and Bacchus*—for Drury-Lane. In 1718, a French company presented *The Two Harlequins* at Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, and an Italian company, about 1724, acted at the Haymarket.² Although, before 1723, John Rich had produced some little Harlequinades "in the taste of the Italian Night-scenes,"³ his genius did not really blaze forth until that year. A little before the performance of *Henry V*, a pantomime called *Dr. Faustus* had been brought out at

¹ Preface to *Henry V*.

² Wyndham, *Annals of Covent Garden Theatre*, I, 12; Winifred Smith, *The Commedia Dell'Arte*, 222 f.

³ Genest, III, 155.

Drury-Lane by Thurmond the dancing-master; Rich followed on December 20 with his *Necromancer, or History of Dr. Faustus*; and on January 21, 1725, with *Harlequin Sorcerer*.

Fielding, in a well-known passage, describes these entertainments as consisting of two parts, "which the inventor distinguished by the names of the serious and the comic. The serious exhibited a certain number of heathen gods and heroes, who were certainly the worst and dullest company into which an audience was ever introduced; and . . . were actually intended so to be, in order to contrast the comic part of the entertainment, and to display the tricks of Harlequin to the better advantage. This was, perhaps, no very civil use of such personages, but the contrivance was, nevertheless, ingenious enough, and had its effect. And this will now plainly appear, if, instead of serious and comic, we supply the words duller and dullest, for the comic was certainly duller than anything before shown on the stage, and could be set off only by that superlative degree of dulness which composed the serious. So intolerably serious, indeed, were these gods and heroes, that Harlequin . . . was always welcome on the stage, as he relieved the audience from worse company."⁴

A more friendly account of Rich's achievement is given by Thomas Davies: "By the help of gay scenes, fine habits, grand dances, appropriated music, and other decorations, he exhibited a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, or some other fabulous writer. Between the pauses or acts of this serious representation, he interwove a comic fable, consisting chiefly of the courtship of Harlequin and Columbine, with a variety of surprising adventures and tricks, which were produced by the magic wand of Harlequin; such as the sudden transformation of palaces and temples to huts

⁴ *Tom Jones*, bk. V, ch. 1.

and cottages; of men and women into wheel-barrows and joint-stools; of trees . . . to houses; colonades to beds of tulips; and mechanics' shops into serpents and ostriches." And of Rich's acting he says that "his gesticulation was so perfectly expressive of his meaning, that every motion of his hand or head, or of any part of his body, was a kind of dumb eloquence that was readily understood by the audience"; his leave-taking of Columbine was at once graceful and affecting.⁵

These two quotations represent pretty well the divergent views of critics and audience about the new entertainment. The critics denounced, and the public enjoyed. In Hogarth's plate of *Masquerades and Operas* (1723), Satan appears dragging a multitude to the masquerade and opera, and on the opposite side crowds rush to witness the pantomimes; over the gateway is the sign of Dr. Faustus, with dragon and windmill; a woman is carting off Shakespeare, Jonson, and the rest in a wheelbarrow. A correspondent in *Pasquin* writes with much concern: "Dear Pasquin, if affairs go on at this rate, the poet and the player will become useless things, while the joiner, the dragon-maker, and posture master run away with all the credit and profit."⁶ On the other hand, a writer in the *Weekly Journal, or Saturday's Post* defends pantomime on the ground that there were rope-walking elephants in Rome.⁷ There is, of course, no question what position Hill would take. In the *Plain Dealer* for July 6, 1724,⁸ he describes the accomplishments of an Africian elephant and a Russian bear, and suggests that they apply at the theatre,—"entering lately with much vivacity upon new plans of action which fall immediately within the genius of our four-footed virtu-

⁵ *Life of Garrick*, I, 92, 331.

⁶ January 21, 1724. See also February 4, 1724.

⁷ January 23 and 30, 1724-1725.

⁸ No. 31.

osos.' His scorn increases month by month; by December, he is commenting on the genius of the actors' limbs, the readiness of their "elastic capacity," the "voice of their muscles"; and is hoping presently to see Mr. Lun (Rich) "crawling up the edge of one of his scenes, and sticking to the roof like a spider over the heads of a shouting pit! where he will spin himself into their good graces, till their necks are half broke with the *sublimity* of their entertainment."⁹

The scorn of the judicious had no effect on Rich; and even the other house, in self-defense, had to try to imitate him as best it could, thus winning for its managers a place in the *Dunciad*.¹⁰ The success of Harlequin and of the *Beggar's Opera* raised the prosperity of Lincoln's-Inn-Fields to a height that embarrassed the older house. The famous actors of Drury-Lane were dropping out one by one: Mrs. Oldfield died in 1731; Wilks, in 1732; Booth, in 1733, after a long illness that had kept him off the stage for several years; Cibber was growing old. Meanwhile, the Haymarket and Goodman's Fields (opened in 1729) were flourishing; the most successful new tragedy, *George Barnwell*, was brought out at the latter house. The prosperity of the minor theatres, the increasing tendency to satirize political conditions, the popularity of pantomime, the disappearance of the old school of actors,—all made the situation about 1730 interesting and full of possibilities. It was clearly a period of change and readjustment, with many opportunities for the critic and the author.

Such Hill found it. From 1730 to 1738, when he re-

⁹ No. 77. See also Nos. 51, 59, and 82.

¹⁰ See *Dunciad*, 1st ed., III, 215:

"When lo! to dark encounter in mid-air,
New wizards rise, here Booth and Cibber there;
Booth in his cloudy tabernacle shrined,
On grinning dragons Cibber mounts the wind."

tired to Plaistow, he was actively concerned in one way or another with the stage: he wrote plays that were successful, a play that failed, and a play that no manager would produce; he elaborated a theory on the art of acting and practised it on several pupils, one of whom did him much credit; he wrote innumerable letters of advice to young actors and actresses; he had ideas about national theatres and schools of dramatic art, and several schemes for theatrical management that almost came to something; he took an active part in the discussion over the regulation of the stage; and he published a periodical, the *Prompter*, in which all his schemes, ideas, and criticisms found expression. Though in many ways he reflected current ideas, the keenness of his comment in some respects has not had the justice done it that it deserves.

It may have been the moderate success of his friends, Mallet and Thomson, in tragedy, that fired his dramatic ambition again. Thomson's *Sophonisba* was produced in 1730 and Mallet's *Eurydice* in 1731.¹¹ For his own attempt, Hill rewrote and (in his opinion) vastly improved the old play of *Elfrid*; under the name of *Athelwold*, it was accepted in 1731 by Drury-Lane. Hill left no stone unturned to make the representation a success. He exhausted his entreaties and his flatteries to induce Wilks, then already near the end of his career, to take the title-rôle;¹²

¹¹ Hill knew much better than Mallet what Mallet meant by the play; they discussed its moral in a brisk correspondence during the month of February. (See letters from Hill to Mallet February 6, 1731, February 9, February 12, February 18, and February 23, in Hill's *Works*, I, 28, 31, 39, 43, 45). Mallet was not at that time, to quote Dr. Johnson, "too high to accept a prologue and epilogue from Aaron Hill, neither of which can be much commended." Few of the prologues and epilogues of the day did deserve any commendation.

¹² See letters from Hill to Wilks September 17 and 25 and November 4, 1731 (*Works*, I, 69, 73, 96); and from Wilks to Hill, September 24 and October 10 (*Col.* 1751).

it was a part sure to give pleasure to Mr. Wilks, and receive life from him; “the turn of it is amorous, inconstant, spirited, attractive, and distressful; it consists of fire and vivacity, endeared and tempered by the softer passions.” But Wilks firmly declined to throw lustre on the character of the hero; he had all he could do to “rub through” his parts in comedy; and Mr. Mills would, he was sure, do the part well with Mr. Hill’s assistance—it would be a wretched actor who could not do well with that!

Then Hill tried to arouse his interest in the dressing of the parts, by sending drawings for “a novelty in the old Saxon dresses,” based on Verstegan’s *Antiquities*, with possibly some Hillian variations.¹³ This antiquarian concern for the correctness of the costumes was in itself a novelty. “To say nothing,” he writes, “as to impropriety in the custom of dressing characters so far back in time after the common fashions of our days, it weakens probability.”¹⁴ There had been in the seventeenth century some feeble efforts at historical accuracy on the French stage, but they were abandoned, either for contemporary dress, or for the hero-costume of flying feathers, Louis XIV wigs, gilt armor, festooned skirts, gilt-fringed gloves, and so on.¹⁵ Garrick, who “never willingly put on the Roman habit,”¹⁶ adopted a simple modern costume in tragedy. Hill’s hints about these Saxon dresses are tantalizing: there were furs, though Hill assures Wilks that they need not be real; “as to the coronets, it was a custom of those times

¹³ Hill to Wilks, October 28, 1731. *Works*, I, 89.

¹⁴ Hill had more to say about theatrical costume in the *Prompter*, No. 22: “An old Roman could never with any propriety be made to look like a modern Frenchman; nor a Dutch Burgomaster’s wife like the Queen of Great Britain.”

¹⁵ See Karl Mantzius, *Hist. of Theatrical Art*, V, 227–228, 370, 391. Pepys, in his diary for March 8, 1664, mentions “garments like the Romans” in a performance of *Heraclius*.

¹⁶ Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, 96.

for persons of high rank to wear them upon common as well as extraordinary occasions; but they must be distinguished more than they are in the papers, to point out the different degrees; and worn in a more becoming position, higher off from the forehead, and a little leaning to one side.”¹⁷ To Hill’s distress, Wilks kept silence on this subject.

Mallet hastened to offer “an engagement of his friends in favor of the tragedy”; a reading was held at Lord Tyrconnel’s;¹⁸ and Pope (who had reasons just then for being very complaisant) not only corrected the play, but promised to do his part in preparing the “expectations of people of the first rank”—a necessary precaution, “if one would wish a play that kind of fame which noise can give it.”¹⁹ And just before the date of presentation, Pope had in a manner rounded up a very respectable audience: Lord Bathurst, Lord Burlington—“who comes on purpose to town,”—another noble Lord (Peterborough, apparently), Gay and Sir William Wyndham.²⁰

The play was acted on December 10, and survived only three nights. “I need not inform you,” Hill wrote to Pope, who, in a kind attempt to gloss over the failure, had reported the audience attentive and a few of the ladies even tearful,²¹ “how it dragged itself along for two lean nights after the first; as lame and wounded as the snake in your poem, but not half so delightfully. It would be affectation, not modesty, to deny that I am nettled at the monstrous reception which the Town has given this tragedy.”

¹⁷ October 28, 1731. *Works*, I, 91.

¹⁸ Hill to Tyrconnel, November 22. *Works*, I, 100.

¹⁹ Hill to Pope, September 30, 1731. *Works*, I, 82.

²⁰ Pope to Hill. *Col.* of 1751. The date should be December 9, not November 12.

²¹ Pope to Hill. *Col.* of 1751. There and in Elwin and Courthope’s *Pope*, the letter is wrongly dated November 14 instead of December 14.

He has a faint hope that "some persons of rank and distinction to bespeak plays and compel audiences may be kind enough to *Athelwold* to introduce him now and then into civiler company, for the sake of the company. It were a downright shame if these good people, who gave the tragedy all its merit of fine dressing and scening, should be suffered to lose their money, while the good-for-nothing author, who was guilty of the dull part of the entertainment, has lost nothing but his labor. But enough of this subject."

No one who reads the play can fail to sympathize with the audience. The simple plot of the earlier play is complicated by the introduction of new episodes, which crowd the action so that the supposed unity of time becomes an absurdity. *Athelwold* is made the betrayer, before his marriage, of a certain *Ethelinda*, a lady of rank; his reason, in fact, still prefers her to *Elfrid*, but he has married the latter chiefly, I suppose, because the king wanted her, and the deed offered him an unexampled opportunity to put himself in a position from which there could be no honorable escape. One felt some sympathy for him when his deception of the king was the result of passionate love for *Elfrid*; but the combination of lying lover and lying subject is too much for the most charitably disposed. *Hill* "raised" the king's character—*Genest* calls it putting him on stilts; no one ever talked like *Edgar*.²² *Elfrid*, after discovering how *Athelwold* acts and hearing how the king

²² He had once seen *Elfrid*, in the crowd at his coronation, and he recalls it thus:

"My raised eye
Met her flashed charms, amidst a gazing crowd,
Who, from the scaffolded cathedral's sides,
Poured their bold looks upon me; greatness and languor
Flowed in a softened radiance from her mien,
Sweetness sat smiling on her humid eyeballs;
And light-winged Fancy danced and flamed about her."

speaks, wisely gets herself to a nunnery ; Ethelinda plunges a dagger into her bosom (behind the scenes), and Athelwold (also behind the scenes) takes her body in his arms and leaps with it into the sea. It is but just to say that there are good lines in the play, and even one or two good speeches ; and Pope, who was reported as having been "warmed" by it, may not have been warmed, as one at first suspects, merely by honest mirth.²³

For the moment, Hill was determined to let the stage go its own way to destruction ; but events soon persuaded him to abandon that resolution. Booth, a few months before his death, disposed of one-half his share in the patent (renewed in 1732 in the names of Cibber, Wilks, and Booth) and of all his power to John Highmore, a wealthy young man ambitious of histrionic distinction, who had "exposed himself," in Genest's phrase, by acting *Lothario* ; after Booth's death, his widow sold the remaining half-share to Giffard of Goodman's Fields ; and Mrs. Wilks delegated her power to the inexperienced Mr. Ellis. Colley Cibber grew disgusted at the importance of Highmore and the ignorance of Ellis, and appointed as his deputy his son Theophilus, "who wanted nothing but power to be as troublesome as any young man living." To rid himself of

²³ Pope said that "no play had ever more warmed him" (Booth to Hill, November 8, 1731, *Col. of 1751*). Ethelinda's speech (Act IV) to Elfrid, after the latter has confirmed the tale of Athelwold's treachery, is good:

"Farewell for ever.

Kneel and pray Heaven, to whose indulgent hand
You owe attraction, to increase and guard it ;
Else will your destined ruin soon instruct you
That he, who, tempted by your charms, betrayed
His heart's vowed mistress, and deceived his king,
Will for some new temptation give up you,
And leave you subject to another's pity,
As I am now to yours."

Theophilus, Highmore, at the end of the season of 1732-33, purchased the elder Cibber's share in the patent; but the discontented young Cibber drew all the actors after him to the Haymarket, and left Highmore to open Drury-Lane in September with such raw recruits as he could collect from the country theatres. The town was thrown into parties, and the two patentees joined forces against the seceders. Persuasion failed; an attempt to secure the interference of the Lord Chamberlain also failed; then the Vagrant Act was put into operation against the actors, and one of them, Harper, was arrested. The outcome of his case was watched with interest on all sides, for it was another test of the patent monopoly. That monopoly was again proved, as in Steele's case, to be ineffective, for Harper was discharged on the ground that he was a free-holder in Surrey and a housekeeper in Westminster.²⁴ This was in November, 1733. By the following March, Highmore, discouraged by his losses, gave up the struggle, and sold out to Fleetwood, a man of fortune and fashion, who persuaded the seceders to return to Drury-Lane.²⁵

During this period of storm and stress, Hill's mind and his pen were busy. He began in January, 1733, by revising a tragedy for Victor, and writing a farce at his request.²⁶ Then he grew interested in Highmore's management, and was deterred from buying the other shares in the patent merely by lack of funds. In April he was considering, apparently on Victor's suggestion, some arrange-

²⁴ Cibber reflected pertinently on this case "that if acting plays without license did not make the performers vagabonds unless they wandered from their habitations so to do, how particular was the case of us three late managing actors, at the Theatre-Royal, who in twenty years before had paid, upon an average, at least twenty thousand pounds to be proteeted (as actors) from a law that has not since appeared to be against us." *Apology*, ed. Lowe, I, 284.

²⁵ See Genest, III, 373 f., for the details of these transactions.

²⁶ The farce was to be called *The Maggot*. It was not performed.

ment with Highmore: "I am so much rather inclined to unite my endeavors with Mr. Highmore's, for raising and establishing Drury-Lane to and in a condition it has not yet been acquainted with, than to open a new house (and to that end either enlarging the little one in the Haymarket, or building another in a better place) that I will not think of anything but a union with Mr. Highmore, if you can find, upon giving yourself the trouble of a conversation or two on the subject, that it is practicable." Will Victor sound Mr. Booth and Mr. Ellis as to their willingness to farm out their shares to him? If the patent were all Highmore's, he would give him a thousand pounds a year for half his profits, and would "add to that company some actors, who have never been seen, heard of, or thought of; and yet at their very first appearance shall be able to put an end to the Town's complaint for the loss of the great men of the stage." He would like to know whether Victor has had any conversation with Highmore, because some gentlemen are desirous of being concerned with him in a design of his own, and he must decide quickly.²⁷

Immediately after the defection of the actors, Hill told Highmore what he thought of the capacity of actor-managers: "If to have surfeited the town with a choking succession of absurdities; if to have dressed . . . Mr. Cibber and his string of comedies; if to consider the new pieces which are offered them in no other light than whether their authors will make interest to support them; if to revive so few old ones that . . . our audiences are able to bear part with the actors; and, finally, if not to have found, made, or left one promising genius for the stage to succeed to the fame of such notable instructors:—if these are the marks of a capacity for directing a theatre, then the players have

²⁷ These letters are found in Victor's *Hist. of the Theatres*, II, 174-193. They are dated January 1, January 5, March 22, April 5, April 9.

a title that can never be questioned." Surely the stage should be in the hands of those competent to instruct actors. He then offers advice for the fall performances, and adds that he has "a considerable variety of new and humorous entertainments in his hands, prepared with the idea of attempting a new theatre"; but he prefers to purchase some share in the patent—"about which Mr. Victor tells me you have no exception to my treating with the ladies."²⁸

Highmore must have been indifferent. On August 31, Hill writes to an unidentified correspondent²⁹ of a design to establish "an academical theatre for improving the taste of the stage, and training up young actors and actresses for the supply of the patent theatres." The company is formed and could open in November, with "a race of plays and entertainments so new in themselves and the manner in which they will be acted that the success will, I think, be insured by the novelty." He had been offered a patent at 400 pounds a year, and was about to accept it when it occurred to him that his correspondent might secure a license. He intends to publish a pamphlet explaining the design, and proposing a subscription for six nights to a "fashionable folly" and a tragedy.³⁰ But all this must have fallen through, for during the autumn, we find Hill acting as adviser to Highmore's raw company, and mark-

²⁸ July 5, 1733. *Works*, I, 129.

²⁹ "Mr. B--r." *Works*, I, 135.

³⁰ In an anonymous pamphlet, *A Proposal for the better Regulation of the Stage*, published in January, 1732, there are ideas similar to some of these expressed by Hill: the stage has been too long under the tyranny of the players; it is not strange that the acting is so poor when a promising young player is dreaded by the management as a possible rival; the actor should be regularly educated. The author suggests a new theatre, managed by a company of stockholders—men of quality, taste, figure, and fortune.

ing the parts that were sent to him for that purpose.³¹ It was a thankless task. There was a strong current of prejudice running against Drury-Lane, which Hill was afraid would increase "to an insurmountable degree of odium very soon, unless the Patentees can be prevailed upon to see their own interest in giving up their unpopular pretensions to prosecute the people who are universally thought to be better actors than their own, and protected, without doubt, by much more powerful hands than the Patentees are aware of."³²

Fleetwood's purchase of the patent ended Hill's hope of an active business interest in Drury-Lane affairs. But the power of criticism remained; and within a few months he had launched his theatrical periodical, *The Prompster*. The first number was published on November 12, 1734, and the paper continued to appear twice a week until July 2, 1736. Associated with Hill in the enterprise was William Popple,³³ who had contributed to Savage's *Miscellany* in 1726, and who had recently had a play or two produced. Hill did not especially admire Popple's work in the *Prompster*—he thought his friend's genius more strikingly displayed in other directions.³⁴ Literary tradition ascribes the papers signed "P" to Popple and those signed "B" to Hill; after the 132d number, there is no signature.³⁵

³¹ See in Hill's *Works*, I, the following letters written in 1733: October 8 (138), October 9 (146), October 15 (149), October 19 (152), October 24 (155), October 24 (159), October 31 (162), October 31 (165), November 3 (168), November 16 (183). Mr. Bridgewater was told that in *Tamerlane* he ought to "speak like an angel and move like a god." That was not very practical advice; but Hill's description of Mrs. Porter's interpretation of the part of Imoinda in *Oroonoko* is both very interesting and full of practical hints.

³² Letter of November 6 to some author. *Works*, I, 171.

³³ See *ante*, ch. II.

³⁴ Forster MS., July 10, 1746.

³⁵ Thomas Dale wrote to Dr. Birch (Birch MSS. 4304) that he thought James Ralph had a hand in the *Prompster*.

“B,” as the author explains in the second number, stands for Broomstick, not Blockhead: “I will sweep away no folly, abuse, or presumption till I have prompted them over and over; but if after such fair and repeated caveats, there shall be found any reprobate obstinacy that despises my word in the ear, or calls in question my authority, I shall . . . show no regard to distinction of persons, but sweep the front and side boxes with as little ceremony and respect as is shown before the curtain by broomsticks of inferior degree to obtruding apples and orange peels.”

He chose for his motto, “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players”; when we daily see so many act amiss, can there be any doubt that a good prompter is wanting? The stage prompter never appears on the stage, but “has some influence over everything that is transacted upon it. . . . Nor can I think it any dishonor, since the stage has so long been transcribing the world, that the world should now make reprisals, and look as freely into the theatres. Let their managers, therefore, be upon their guard; and their dependents, tragic or comic, take good heed to their parts; since there is from this day forward arisen a prompter, without doors, who hath a cat-call as well as a whistle; and whenever the players grow flat, will himself make bold to be musical.”³⁶

The specifically theatrical purpose with which the paper was thus started remains prominent throughout. But other subjects were handled: there were philosophical papers, most of them signed “P,”—typical eighteenth century discussions about the nature of evil, the origin of moral virtue, the evidences of order and harmony in the universe, free-will, chance, and the like;³⁷ papers touching upon social and economic problems, such as the evils of debtors’

³⁶ No. 1.

³⁷ Nos. 69, 70, 73, 74, 77, 78, 86, 89, 90, 151, 153, 156. See ch. VI for a controversy with the *Grub Street Journal*, ostensibly over deism.

prisons, slavery, and the development of Georgia;³⁸ and papers of literary criticism,—the beauties of the epic (illustrated by extracts from Hill's unpublished epic of *Gideon*), and the relative merits of rhyme and blank verse (also illustrated by Hill's own efforts).³⁹ A very small group deals with politics, chiefly the evils of party spirit,⁴⁰ and another group preaches short sermons on social morality, ranging from the advantages of cleanliness or of the due submission of wives to husbands, to the wickedness of hunting or duelling; they are very "elegant" and very platitudinous, and several of them would furnish admirable texts for the lectures of the modern eugenist or suffragist.⁴¹

But the stage papers are both most interesting in themselves and most important historically. Unfortunately, the *Prompter* is rare, unattractive with its double columns of fine print, and burdened with many dull papers. Pick out the essays of dramatic criticism, however, read them in connection with what was going on, realize that they preceded a crisis,—and they will appear of some value as documents in literary history. If carefully selected, rearranged, repunctuated, respelled,—edited perhaps in the old unscrupulous way that made excisions without com-

³⁸ Nos. 18, 36, 40, 87, 124, 135, 143, 163, 167, 168. On practical grounds, Hill gave slavery a qualified approval as the less of two evils in the case of Georgia; better limit the importation of slaves than prohibit it (No. 87). "B" is the author of two papers making an appeal on behalf of debtors; he estimates the number then confined at 12,000; points out their slight chance of escape from disease; the uneconomic waste of good material; and the tremendous expense in money alone of the system—390,000 l. spent in law-charges and jailors' fees by debtors and creditors.

³⁹ Nos. 28, 48, 59, 71, 72, 76, 96, 148, 149, 154, 164, 172, 173.

⁴⁰ Nos. 4, 12, 27, 83.

⁴¹ Nos. 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25, 26, 31, 32, 43, 49, 52, 58, 61, 63, 65, 75, 82, 85, 97, 121, 157, 160, 161. Most of these are by "P," and justify Hill's disparaging opinion of Popple's gifts as an essayist.

punction,—they would form a pleasant little volume illustrating the stage of their day. And the criticism they embody has received the praise of being the best contemporary criticism of an interesting situation.⁴² This discussion will treat them as a group, and attempt a classification that may bring out their significance. They deal with the true function of the stage and its proper sphere of influence, and with its actual influence for evil; and they try to place the responsibility for that evil influence, and to suggest remedies. Similar opinions are scattered through the plays, periodicals, letters, and pamphlets of the day, but the *Prompter's* value is that it focusses them all.

There is, of course, no conception of the drama purely as an art. Its function is to combine amusement with instruction; and precept and example—the methods of philosophy and of history—are both at the service of the dramatic author. The Athenians understood its function: they made tragedy a school of wisdom and comedy a school of reproof. And the stage should teach manners as well as morals; it is the mirror held up to the world that the world may see and correct its deformities. This was the ideal. How far did the contemporary stage realize it? It was a school of vice, not virtue. Our tragedy, says the *Prompter*, corrupts the mind and breathes into the soul rash revenge and wanton love; our comedy, though it pretends to reprove finical dress in youth, misanthropy, pedantry in ladies, and the like, actually tends towards conjugal infidelity, foolish indulgence of wives, and ridicule of old age.⁴³ Fielding observes of the heroes of some plays of the day that they are “commonly eminent for those very talents which not only bring men to the gallows, but enable them to make an heroic figure when they are there.”⁴⁴

⁴² Nicholson, *Struggle for a Free Stage*, 67, note.

⁴³ See Nos. 30, 79, 80, 105, 109, 113, 134, 171.

⁴⁴ *Tom Jones*, book VIII, 1.

So much for the plays. What of the actors? We have already seen that Hill held very positive views about the art of acting. In the *Prompter* he does not as a rule single out individuals for his criticism; but Colley Cibber and James Quin come in for some hard knocks. Cibber, under the pseudonym of "Outis," had been expressing in the *Grub Street Journal* a very favorable opinion of his own abilities, and Hill, in a comment on the letter, declares that "Mr. Quin must be confessed to be sometimes wrong in his tragic characters; Mr. Cibber to be always so." Nature, by voice, figure, and conception, limited Cibber to be a comedian—"he was born to be laughed at." He praises his "exquisite propriety of affectation, where he squeaks, bows, ogles, dresses, laughs, or any other way exerts the comedian, in Sir Courtly and Lord Foppington." But when in *Syphax* or *Richard III*, Hill sees, "in place of menaces and majestic transports, the distorted heavings of an unjointed caterpillar," he must conclude him unfitted for tragedy.⁴⁵ As for Quin—"Mr. All-weight"—he was told that to be always deliberate and solemn was as much of an error as never to be so.⁴⁶ Cibber laughed at the caterpillar, but Quin was angry, and "meeting Mr. Hill in the Court of Requests, a scuffle ensued between them, which ended in the exchange of a few blows."⁴⁷

Other strongly personal comments Hill wisely confined to dead actors, and some of his descriptions of their acting are very graphic. That of Booth is often quoted:⁴⁸ "Two advantages distinguished him in the strongest light from the rest of his fraternity: he had learning to understand perfectly whatever it was his part to speak, and judgment

⁴⁵ No. 3.

⁴⁶ No. 92.

⁴⁷ Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, 138.

⁴⁸ Published in Victor's *Life of Booth*, 1733, and in Hill's *Works*, II, 115.

to know how far it agreed or disagreed with the character. Hence arose a peculiar grace. . . . He could soften and slide over with a kind of elegant negligence the improprieties in a part he acted, while . . . he would dwell with energy upon the beauties, as if he exerted a latent spirit, which had been kept back for such an occasion, that he might alarm, awaken, and transport in those places only where the dignity of his own good sense could be supported by that of his author. . . . The passions in comedy were not strong enough to excite his fire; and what seemed want of qualification was only absence of impression. One might have said of him in the Scripture phrase, 'He is not dead, but sleepeth.' . . . He had a talent at discovering the passions where they lay hid in some celebrated parts, having been buried under a prescription of rantings and monotony, by the practise of other actors. When he had discovered, he soon grew able to express 'em. And his secret . . . was an association, or adaptation of his look to his voice; by which artful imitation of nature, the variations in the sound of his words gave propriety to every change in his countenance. So that among players in whom it is common to hear pity pronounced with a frown upon the forehead, sorrow expressed by a grin upon the eye, and anger thundered out with a look of unnatural serenity, it was Mr. Booth's peculiar felicity to be heard and seen the same, whether as the pleased, the grieved, the pitying, the reproachful, or the angry. One would almost be tempted to borrow the aid of a very bold figure, and . . . affirm that *the blind might have seen him in his voice, and the deaf have heard him in his visage.*"

Mr. Booth was Hamlet's solemn half and Mr. Wilks his gay half. The latter's method of delivering the speech of Hamlet to the ghost was ineffective:⁴⁹ he hurried through

⁴⁹ No. 100.

the whole scene without pause; the words, "By Heaven, I say away!" he addressed to the ghost, and advanced against it with drawn sword, not perceiving the "shocking indecorum" of drawing one's sword against one's father's ghost. The *Prompter* would have Hamlet speak in low amazement when he sees the ghost, "fixing his eyes with a kind of riveted doubt"; after the words "angels and ministers of grace," he should stop a moment, and then commence a slow approach, accompanied by broken sentences in a voice struggling against the oppression of a growing terror; "questionable" should receive marked emphasis, for he draws courage from the reflection that the ghost is a shape he may question; he kneels at the word "father," anxiously awaits the effect of each of the names he adjures him with, and in the "O, answer me," his voice should express a sort of "desperate impatience."

The *Lear* comments are interesting. Had a certain player who acted Lear some time since, says the *Prompter*, heeded Shakespeare's description of anger in *Henry V*, the house would not have remained cold. This Lear was calm and resigned; delivered his passionate outburst at Regan's reception of him with a look of affliction and patient restraint; and "upon every occasion that required the sharp and the elevated, the stretched note and the exclamatory, the king mistook, like a dog in a dream, that does but sigh when he thinks he is barking." Instead of grinding out his curse of Regan from between his teeth, he advanced to the foot-lights, knelt, and pronounced it with the calmness of a prayer, thus destroying the pity of the audience for him, and scandalizing them by his serene malice.⁵⁰

If Hill refrained from mentioning names, he did not hesitate to lump together the whole company of players as "the very worst set of actors that ever disgraced the

⁵⁰ No. 95.

nation." Their faults are ranting, affectation, mouthing, bellowing, and whining,—the last the peculiar crime of the ladies, who probably wish thereby to create an effect of innocence, and succeed only in being innocent of meaning and "inarticulately diverting, like infancy."⁵¹ They are all so indolent that they cease to act as soon as they cease to speak, and amuse themselves by examining the audience, until they hear their cue; "at which, like soldiers on the word of command, they start suddenly back to their postures, tone over the unanimating sound of their lesson, and then (like a caterpillar that has erected itself at the touch of a twig) shrink back to their crawl and their quiet; and enjoy their full ease till next rousing." They cannot even die with judgment and decency. Hill has seen a "periwig-pated fellow" shake a tempest of powder about him, and fall "like a chimney in a high wind, not only frightening but blinding all who stood under his ruins."⁵²

The players address to the audience whatever they should keep to themselves, and retain for themselves what they ought to bestow on the audience. In a soliloquy they should look anywhere except at the audience. If, when an actor "comes forward to the line of lamps on the edge of the stage, and after sending his eyes like his gentlemen-ushers into the pit or the boxes, begins to tell the spectators, 'I am alone!'" some honest lover of truth should call out, "That's a lie, for you look in the faces of twelve hundred people who are able to contradict you,"—that would be more effective than cat-calls.⁵³ They are afraid of expressing passion. The Prompter urged an actress who had a part of "distressful anguish" to look sorrowful: "O, dear

⁵¹ No. 99.

⁵² No. 62.

⁵³ No. 104. The numbers dealing with acting are 3, 56, 62, 64, 66, 67, 92, 95, 99, 100, 103, 104, 113, 117, 118, 129. Most of them are signed "B."

Sir! anything but making faces in tragedy!" She was in fact too much rouged, he remarks, to permit crying in good earnest.

Hill did not confine himself to destructive criticism. He had a carefully elaborated theory of the art of acting, of which the *Prompter* gives samples both in prose and verse. The poem (in revised form) was afterwards published separately in 1746, and the prose essay⁵⁴ was considered valuable enough to be reprinted with comments in 1821. To depict the passions one must have some knowledge of them; let the actor first conceive the passion of anger, for instance; his body will fall into appropriate attitudes; and when the eye is inflamed and the muscles braced, he cannot help speaking angrily. This power of conception is, of course, the gift of the imaginative artist—a fact Hill does not sufficiently emphasize. But stripped of its verbiage and its strange pseudo-scientific terms, Hill's theory seems to be in accord with the modern theory of the emotions: make the appropriate gestures, assume the appropriate attitudes, and you will feel the emotion; the frown and the clenched fist come first and the anger follows. Why he thought of embodying his ideas in verse is more than one can imagine. What is a little oddly phrased but quite intelligible, in the prose, becomes simply absurd in verse:

"On the raised neck, oft moved, but ever straight,
Turn your unbending head with easy state."

"Spread be your opening breast; oft changed your face;
Step with a slow severity of grace;
Pausingly warm, significantly rise,
And affectation's empty swell despise."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Works*, IV, 355 f.

⁵⁵ No. 113. These lines inspired a poet to write "The Praise of Tobacco, in imitation of Mr. A. H - - l's style," *Gent. Mag.*, VI, 547, September, 1736:

"On the raised lip, oft moved, obliquely straight,

A more poetical expression than any in the poem is one in prose: "The passions are what keys are in a harpsichord. If they are aptly and skilfully touched, they will vibrate their different notes to the heart, and *awaken in it the music of humanity.*"

There is no question that the acting of tragedy did need reform. When Charles Macklin, later a rival of Garrick, engaged with Rich about 1725, he spoke, he says, "so familiar, and so little in the hoity-toity tone of the tragedy of that day, that the manager told me I had better go to grass for another year or two."⁵⁶ And Davies' account of the effect of Garrick's acting throws light on the old manner that excited the wrath of the *Prompster*: "Mr. Garrick's easy and familiar, yet forcible style, in speaking and acting, at first threw the critics into some hesitation concerning the novelty as well as propriety of his manner. They had been long accustomed to an elevation of the voice, with a sudden mechanical depression of its tones, calculated to excite admiration and to entrap applause. To the just modulation of the words, and concurring expression of the features from the genuine workings of nature, they had been strangers, at least for some time."⁵⁷ Of Garrick, Mr. "All-weight" Quin said that "if the young fellow was right, he and the rest of the players had been all wrong."⁵⁸

Let the glazed tube recline, with easy state;
 Pointedly look.
 Puff, with a slow severity of grace,
 Pausingly wise," etc.

Hill's revised version is much less absurd.

⁵⁶ Cook, *Memoirs of Charles Macklin*, 99.

⁵⁷ *Life of Garrick*, I, 40. Davies says (I, ch. 13) that Hill was "almost the only gentleman who labored assiduously to understand the art of acting, and who took incessant pains to communicate his knowledge of it to others." He speaks of his "just and important" sentiments on acting, and of his admirable lessons to Rich's performers.

⁵⁸ Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, 44.

The audience needed prompting as much as the actors.⁵⁹ Their manners were often more suited to bear-gardens than to his Majesty's theatres. The *Prompter* was present one night at "his Majesty's dramatical bear-garden, to observe the success of a baiting, called 'Every Man in his Folly.' . . . The audience, from the footmen's gallery to the boxes beneath them, so prevented by their noise any use of their understanding, that it was impossible either to acquit or condemn from anything that we heard on the theatre." When a new play comes on, three-fourths of the audience entertain themselves for the evening with a mob-scene of their own, and the author, like a Presbyterian reprobate, is predestined to be damned. Applause might compete with hisses, but not with hisses, cat-calls, shouts, and "horseLaughs." He begs the boisterous young men with cudgels to "hold themselves contented at Hockley-in-the-Hole."⁶⁰

The *Prompter* was not alone in its criticism. James Ralph⁶¹ tells how the tradesmen in the pit, in their impatience to get good seats, bring their unfinished meals tied up in colored handkerchiefs, and neglect Mark Antony for the leg of a pullet, or drown Monimia's distress in a glass of sack. The boxes whisper, nod, talk scandal, and conduct intrigues; others get on the stage and jostle the performers. In the gallery the people are well enough behaved, except that they are liberal of orange-peel to the stage and the pit; but the footmen's gallery disturbs everything. The *Weekly Register*⁶² describes the footmen lolling over boxes,

⁵⁹ Hill was much pleased with Garrick's acting, especially with his lack of affectation (letter to Mallet, April 20, 1744, *Works*, II, 34). Not that he thought him in need of no further instruction; he offered to mark all the occasions for the "most alarming attitudes" in *Othello* (letter to Garrick, October 14, 1746, II, 266).

⁶⁰ See nos. 20, 136, 139.

⁶¹ *The Taste of the Town*, 1732, p. 130 f.

⁶² March 25, 1732. Quoted in the *Gent. Mag.*, II, 661.

where they are keeping places, taking snuff, humming, laughing, talking across the house, and interrupting the play with their bear-garden quarrels in the upper gallery. Joseph Andrews, who "led the opinion of all the other footmen at an opera," was "a little too forward in riots at the playhouse."⁶³ Tom Jones went with Mr. Nightingale and his company to a "new play, which was to be acted that evening, and which a very large party had agreed to damn, from some dislike they had taken to the author"; Sophia left terrified at the end of the first act, for "being a new play, at which two large parties met, the one to damn and the other to applaud, a violent uproar and an engagement between the two parties" arose.⁶⁴ Lord Dapper, in the *Historical Register*,⁶⁵ thought himself a very good judge of plays, though he spent half the time in the green-room talking to the actresses, and the other half in the boxes talking with the women of quality. "Thou art a sweet judge of plays, indeed," comments the Prompter in the play.

But what of the plays? What did the turbulent audience like? Pantomime and entertainments, of course,— "those disgraces of our stage, those wild triumphs of folly."⁶⁶ At the end of the 6th number of the *Prompter* appears an advertisement for Common Sense, hunted or strayed out of the theatres of the city, and supposed to be lurking in some remote region. Not until a year and a

⁶³ *Joseph Andrews*, bk. I, ch. 4. For an account of one of the worst of these riots, see *Gent. Mag.*, for March, 1737: the footmen, denied entrance to the gallery because of their rudeness, broke open doors, and wounded twenty-five persons.

⁶⁴ *Tom Jones*, book XIII, ch. 9. See also *Jonathan Wild*, book I, ch. 6.

⁶⁵ Act I, near the end.

⁶⁶ See nos. 6, 12, 35, 105, 109, 117, 125, 127, 128, 149, 166. For comments on the opera, which was a dangerous rival of tragedy, see nos. 7, 14, 23, 37, 106, 155. These are mostly by "P."

half later is the lost stray discovered, in Fielding's theatre, armed with wit and satire rather too forcible to be graceful. Of new plays, tragedy has little chance of a hearing, and comedy and farce must be combined with some entertainment before the audience will suffer it. The poor author sees a battery of pantomime levelled against his play; and worse still, he has to contribute to the expense of the show that is destroying the taste for plays—to pay for a knife to cut his own throat. The stage is peopled with “monsters, tumblers, ladder-dancers, Italian shadows, dumb-shows, buffoonery, and nonsense”; it will soon become a place like Sadler's Wells, Bartholomew Fair, Fawkes's Dexterity of Hand, or Cups and Balls. Surely the songs would lose none of their merit, if a little meaning were mixed with their mirth. But Hill himself tried the experiment; the managers would none of his *Daraxes*; “in things . . . which have a chain and dependence of scenes,” they said, “a poet expects more than in good manners he ought from the attention and patience of persons of quality; whereas in grotesque entertainments . . . there being neither beginning, middle, nor end, the company are held down to no indecent necessity, but may look on or off at their pleasure.” I see no reason for the managers' refusal, on this score, of Hill's musical entertainments—they hold one down to no indecent necessity.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Contemporary literature is full of satirical references to Rich and the pantomimes: James Miller's *Harlequin Horace* (1732) is dedicated to J -- n R -- h, who “first introduced among us the present delicate and amazing taste in our diversions”; *The Dramatic Poetaster, a Vision* (1732) describes many of the shows:

“There strong no-meanings flash upon the sight,
Baboons enchant and crocodiles delight;
Then cats are eloquent and sticks are wise;
Sense starts from raree-shows and art from pyes.”

The *Grub Street Journal* (No. 269) has a burlesque satire on entertainments called *The Tower of Babel*; Fielding's *Tumbledown Dick*,

As to the managers, Hill is hopeless of their improvement. He excepts from his condemnation Fielding and Giffard, who were running the Haymarket and Goodman's Fields; both these unlicensed houses are better managed than the patent theatres. The patentees, Rich and Fleetwood, whom he admires for some admirable qualities, he dubs "Lunny" and "Lightwit," and declares that there is little to choose between them in the matter of general incompetence. It is a case of "Arcades ambo—id est, rascals both"—

"Both managers, and both alike inspired
To act what neither sense nor wit required."

On the plan of Virgil's Third Pastoral, Hill gives a dialogue between Lunny, Lightwit, and Common Sense. Lightwit is discovered reading:

"Lunny: What read you, Lightwit? Pantomime, no doubt?
Lightwit: No, Lunny, guess again, for there you're out."

It appears that he is reading tragedy—to get material for a burlesque. Common Sense agrees to be referee in a contest of skill, in which the stakes are monkey-skins, dog-skins, and other transformation scene properties. Lightwit boasts that the audience claps his "squeaking pig"; Lunny, that he can lay his own eggs and bring forth Harlequins. Common Sense awards them both the monkey-skin.⁶⁸

or Phaeton in the Suds satirized Rich; see also *Gent. Mag.*, II, 662, III, 179, and Ralph's *Taste of the Town*, ch. III. Hill's *Snake in the Grass* (*Dramatic Works*, II) is a burlesque of pantomimes: among other details, Tragedy is routed through a trap-door by Harlequin; the Genius of the stage, a mixed Scaramouche and Columbine, suggests the introduction of a dancing cat or two to make tragedy go down with the audience; the Poet cries out "wooden swords, wooden heads, wooden management."

⁶⁸ No. 132. See also nos. 35, 50, 51, 53, 56, 100, 117, 123, 127, 128, 132. Most of these are by Hill. Davies describes Fleetwood as a gentleman of elegant manners, but addicted to gambling and to low

The managers are improvident as well as incompetent: as a result of their failure to form plans in the summer for the coming winter, the same monotonous succession of tragedies appears every season, and for variety an equally tiresome succession of the same old comedies—"in liquid burnings or in dry to dwell, is all the sad variety of hell." They have a right to seek their profit; but in seeking it, they have no right to use their patent for purposes it was not originally intended for. Hill suggests an amendment to the statute of Elizabeth: "A vagrant, in the plainest and most rational sense of the word, is a wanderer. Not only he who strolls from his place of habitation, but he also who wanders out of the sphere of his understanding, is a stroller. . . . How happy, therefore, would it have been for the stage, had there been added to the act a clause, declaring all such managers to be vagrants and liable to the merited correction, who, without the pretensions of genius or judgment, should presume to stroll into dramatical regions, and impudently assume the direction of a province wherein they have never been naturalized."

What constructive criticism did the *Prompter* offer for the whole deplorable situation? Hill is sometimes inclined to find the true root of decay in the players' gross ignorance of their art, and in the Town's indulgence towards both vicious plays and bad acting; and as one remedy, he suggests a subscription for a new theatre. The best account of this scheme is found, not in the *Prompter*, but in a letter to Thomson (September 5, 1735): no experiment can be made in the old theatres, under their present management; Hill would like to hazard a trial in a new, with the support of some "untaxed encouragers," and establish company; he made fair promises and broke them; bailiffs were often in possession of his theatre towards the close of his management (*Life of Garrick*, I, 60-61).

a “‘tragic academy for extending and regulating theatrical diversions, and for instructing and educating actors in the practise of the dramatic passions.’’ If the Prince could only be engaged to put his name at the head of a list of those willing to countenance the undertaking! But the Prince could not.⁶⁹

Other efforts were being made to reform the theatre. A bill for restraining the number and abuses of the play-houses was introduced by Sir John Barnard in the House of Commons, March 5, 1735, only to be withdrawn after much discussion on April 30. The immediate occasion of the measure was the outcry raised by the projection of a new theatre in St. Martin’s le Grand. A pamphlet⁷⁰ that came out in support of the bill argued that any increase in the number of theatres—especially in a district full of apprentices—was dangerous, for apprentices were not improved by seeing how ancient heroes made love, or men of rank plotted against the virtue of the daughters and wives of citizens; and in the entertainments they saw something ten times more immoral. But Hill mentions, as a report that meets credit among thinking men, that the announcement of this new theatre was merely a strategem of one of the patentees to incense the magistrates, and pave the way for the establishment of “‘his throne (and that of his brother monarch) in the empire of nonsense, by a Parliamentary exclusion of all other pretenders.’’ Regulation of some sort, he agrees, is necessary, for it is useless to hope for a change in the taste or an enlargement of the understanding or the morality of the managers. But why merely restrain the number of corrupt and ridiculous theatres? Why not remodel and correct the abuses of the old? Put the direction in qualified hands, under regulation, not restraint;

⁶⁹ *Works*, II, 126. Hill refers again to the plan as one that had to be given up, in a letter to Thomson of May 20, 1736, *Works*, I, 233.

⁷⁰ *A Seasonable Examination*, etc., 1735.

and do not allow any patentee to suppose he deserves a monopoly to the exclusion of better capacities. One clause in the bill provided that no person should act, represent, or perform, any tragedy, comedy, opera, play, farce, or other entertainment for gain, hire, or reward, except the holders of patents or their deputies; and of this the *Prompter* says, “There is no possibility the stage should ever subsist in this kingdom if authors and actors are subjected without control to the caprice or ignorance of any men who may hereafter look upon a patent only as a proper security upon which to lay out their money.”

After the suspension of the bill, the *Prompter* felt at liberty to speak freely, without disrespect to Parliament. This was Hill’s plan: to deprive the present “licentious and licensed incumbents” of a power they were not worthy of, and then institute an inquiry to discover how it might be placed in abler hands. “When such blunder-headed undertakers as these cry out to the public authority to protect their incapacities from the correction of better examples, I can consider it in no other light than as one of the silliest of all those impudent farces, which have been acted by, for, or under them.” Rich had tried to prove his actors rogues several years before; a fool at the head of rogues was dangerous and absurd. As for the Act of Elizabeth invoked for that purpose, it was directed only against the abuse of the players’ art. The stage is corrupt; will it be reformed by giving to those who have corrupted it already the power to corrupt it further? Permit free competition, cries Hill. If theatres are allowed to multiply, the wisest among the managers will surely silence the silliest. “Prohibit the acting any farce, harlequiny, buffoonery, or other dancing, singing, dumb, or deserving-to-be-dumb entertainment, or anything beyond plain tragedy or comedy, except only in the royal and licensed

theatres." This would leave their Delilahs to the present Samsons of the stage, and bestow on their rivals only what they have parted with already. The Town would be pleased—the gay and fashionable might meet at the "sign of the License," and the wise and serious could go elsewhere. Either the new theatres would die for want of encouragement, or their success would be due to the merits of the play and the actors; and in that case would react favorably on the patentees, and shame them out of their corruption and ignorance.⁷¹

The *Prompter* finally came to a close in July, 1736, less than a year before the passage of the Licensing Act. Hill had noted with approval Fielding's productions at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, and had pointed out that while the patent houses were competing in spectacle and dumb-show, a "gentleman, under the disadvantages of a very bad house, with scarce an actor, and at very little expense, by the single power of satire, wit, and common sense, has been able to run a play for 24 nights, which is now but beginning to rise in the opinion of the town." *Pasquin* actually had a run of fifty nights, and was succeeded by the *Historical Register*, another keen satire on Walpole. Fielding's satire did not bring about the Licensing Act; a contributing cause was certainly the jealousy felt by the patentees for the success of the unlicensed theatres; but it was perhaps the last straw. When a play called *The Golden Rump*, containing a still more violent attack on the Government, came into Walpole's hands, the ministry made up its mind.⁷² A bill similar to Sir John

⁷¹ See nos. 53 and 54. For other papers on the question of management, see nos. 38, 42, 45, 117.

⁷² This play was sent to Giffard, perhaps to entrap him; but he was wary and sent it to Walpole. As a reward, he was suffered to keep Goodman's Fields open under one pretext or another for a time. Hill noted in No. 23 of the *Prompter* that the stage would soon have

Barnard's was prepared and hurried through Parliament (June 21, 1737): no performance not sanctioned by a patent from the Crown or a license from the Lord Chamberlain could be presented, and the play must be put into the Lord Chamberlain's hands a fortnight before representation. The immediate results were the closing of the Hay-market and Goodman's Fields, and the prohibition of Thomson's *Edward and Eleanora* and Brooks's *Gustavus Vasa*.

The monopoly of the legitimate drama, thus established, held its own almost unchallenged for fifty years. Then followed years of struggle against it, with many interesting phases, until the bill of 1737 was finally repealed in 1843. Though tragedy and comedy were confined to the patent theatres, small houses, running under licenses of one sort or another, produced burlettas, farces, and musical entertainments of all kinds; and continued to increase in the face of patent opposition and in spite of many vicissitudes. In 1787, "it clearly appeared that the predictions of Aaron Hill over half a century before had come to pass, namely, that a monopoly of the legitimate drama must ultimately lead to a lowering in tone of theatrical performances."⁷³ From 1787 to 1810, many unsuccessful efforts were made to act political satire or nothing, and he quoted a bill, distributed by Punch and Harlequin at a masquerade: "On Thursday, by the Norfolk Company of artificial Comedians, at Robin's great Theatrical Booth in Palace-Yard, will be presented a comical and diverting Play of Seven Acts, called Court and Country; in which will be revived the entertaining Seene of Two Blundering Brothers, with the Cheats of Rabbi Robin, Prime Minister of King Solomon; the whole concluding with a great Masque, called, The Downfall of Sejanus, or, The Statesman's Overthrow, with Axes, Gibbets, and other Decorations proper to the Play." Whether this particular bill was ever printed or not, it is a good illustration of the lengths to which attacks on Walpole were carried.

⁷³ Nicholson, *Struggle for a Free Stage*, etc., 121.

to establish a third patent theatre, for the production of national drama. The older houses had been so enlarged that plays could not be heard by many of the spectators, and as a result, spectacle, show, and melodrama usurped their stages. Dramatists, who could seldom get their plays produced, joined forces, in the closing period of the struggle, with the minor theatres, and at last won the victory. "Had the wise counsel of the editor of the *Prompter* been followed in 1735, to restrict the minors to the legitimate drama, the false position which the patent houses had been forced to assume for the last fifty years of their existence would have been reversed, and, though the monopoly was sure to fall sooner or later, the patentees might have enjoyed the last years of their 'exclusive privileges' in some degree of comfort."⁷⁴

For the academical theatre of which Hill dreamed in 1733, he had ready his adaptation of Voltaire's *Zaïre*, which had been recently produced with great success in Paris. Hill was so "strongly delighted"⁷⁵ with the play that he lost no time in making a translation; one scene was printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in May, 1733, and the public was told how Rich had refused the tragedy.⁷⁶ Highmore accepted it in the fall, but delayed the production from month to month until his season was over. Hill had intended to give the profits to William Bond, an old friend of his, whose acquaintance was "too large for his fortune";⁷⁷ but two years' solicitation of the managers had no result. At length, in June, 1735, Hill's nephew hired Sir Richard Steele's great Music-room in Villars Street, York Buildings, for an amateur performance, in which he took the rôle of Osman and Bond that of Lusignan.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *Struggle for a Free Stage*, 418.

⁷⁵ Letter to Pope, November 7, 1733, *Works*, I, 177.

⁷⁶ *Gent. Mag.*, April, 1733.

⁷⁷ Letter to Pope, November 7, 1733, *Works*, I, 177.

⁷⁸ See *Prompter*, no. 60.

“The reputation of the author,” says Davies, “brought some of the best company in London to this diminutive theatre.”⁷⁹ On the first night, Bond, old and feeble as the character he was supposed to represent, fainted in earnest in the scene where Lusignan blesses his children, and died a few hours afterwards. In spite of this tragedy, there were two more performances, so successful that the Drury-Lane management at last saw fit to bring *Zara* out in the following January.⁸⁰

The result was, comparatively speaking, a triumph, for the play had an uninterrupted run of fourteen nights. Much of the success was due to the acting of one of Hill’s pupils in dramatic art—Susanna Maria Cibber,⁸¹ who had never before appeared in tragedy. Hill had taken infinite pains to instruct her in every look and gesture, and to mark every accent and emphasis in her part. “Her great excellence,” according to Davies, “consisted in that simplicity which needed no ornament; in that sensibility which despised all art; there was in her person little or no elegance; in her countenance a small share of beauty; but . . . the harmony of her voice was as powerful as the animation of her look. In grief and tenderness her eyes looked as if they swam in tears; in rage and despair, they seemed to dart flashes of fire. In spite of the unimportance of her figure, she maintained a dignity in her action, and a grace in her step.”⁸² Unfortunately, Hill’s delight in the deserved applause of this pupil was “damped by the unhappy failure of his nephew in *Osman*; the young gentleman’s figure and voice were by no means disagreeable; but a certain stiffness in action and too labored and emphatical an emphasis in

⁷⁹ *Life of Garrick*, I, ch. 13.

⁸⁰ January 12.

⁸¹ She was the daughter of the musician Arne, and the wife of Theophilus Cibber.

⁸² *Life of Garrick*, II, 109.

speaking, disgusted the critics, who too severely corrected a young performer, whom, on the first night of his acting, they cruelly exploded.'⁸³ Young Hill retired from the stage after that evening.

Voltaire was "too generous to disclaim" his *Zaïre*, "though naturalized in England."⁸⁴ Through his friend Thieriot, he signified to Hill his pleasure at the success of the English performance; and in the Dedicatory Epistle prefixed to the second edition (1736) of the tragedy, he referred in flattering terms to the translation and to the translator—"M. Hill, homme de lettres, qui paraît connaître le théâtre mieux qu'aucun auteur anglais."⁸⁵ He praised Hill especially for abandoning a long-established custom of English playwrights—that of concluding each act with a rhymed couplet or two, containing a comparison. This statement contained several slight inaccuracies, which Lessing took pleasure in pointing out later.⁸⁶ But the

⁸³ Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, ch. 13.

⁸⁴ Hill to Voltaire, June 3, 1736, *Works*, I, 241.

⁸⁵ Voltaire makes one little criticism of Hill's translation. Although Hill has, he says, generally reproduced the decorum of the French play in the expression of love, he has yielded to old custom in one or two places:—when Osman tells Zaïre that he no longer loves her, she weeps, and Osman exclaims, "Zaïre, vous pleurez!" The translator, not content with this simplicity, makes Zara grovel at the sultan's feet, but does not change the Sultan's exclamation; the sultan ought to have said, remarks Voltaire, "Zaïre, vous vous roulez par terre!"

⁸⁶ *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, XV, June 19, 1767. Lessing points out that rhymed couplets, by no means always containing a comparison, are common in English plays from Shakespeare on, at the end of act or scene; but they are not invariably found before Hill's day, nor did they disappear as a result of his influence—a statement made by Voltaire; and in *Zara* itself, Hill ends several acts with couplets, though not with a comparison. As Lessing says, "Es sind nicht mehr als nur drei Unwahrheiten in dieser Stelle; und das ist für den Herren von Voltaire eben nicht viel." In Appendix I of L. Morel's *Thomson* the whole matter is discussed and an attempt made to support Voltaire.

praise of Hill's translation as accurate is on the whole deserved. He follows the French text closely, merely warming a few speeches with his own poetic fire, and softening the character of Osman by many touches of gallantry.⁸⁷

Voltaire did not think it necessary to mention what Hill was careful to point out in the *Prompter* (114),—that in this play Voltaire had “been nobly warming himself at the fire of our English *Othello*.⁸⁷” At this time the English were disposed to be rather pleased and flattered than otherwise by such evidence of French appreciation of Shakespeare. The play is based on the conflict between religion and love in the breast of Zara, a maiden of Christian parentage, who has been a captive from infancy in the hands of the Saracens. She is passionately in love with the generous young Sultan and he with her, and they are about to be married, when she discovers in the noble captive general, Lusignan, her own father, and in young Nerestan, just returned from France with a ransom for the Christians, her brother. The joy of this recognition is followed by general dismay, when the father and brother find that Zara is herself a Mohammedan and about to become the bride of the Sultan; they beg her to adopt the religion of her ancestors and give up her love. Meanwhile, the Sultan's jealousy is aroused by her troubled manner and

⁸⁷ Cf. “Lorsque les Sarrasins, de carnage fumants,
Revinrent l'arracher à mes bras tout sanglants,”
and Hill's

“When from my bleeding arms fierce Saracens
Forced the lost innocent, who smiling lay
And pointed playful at the swarthy spoilers.”

Hill's sultan says gallantly:

“For Zara—but to name her as a captive
Were to dishonor language”

a touch all Hill's own.

her interviews with Nerestan, whom he does not know to be her brother; he discovers a secret meeting between them, rashly stabs Zara, then learns the truth from Nerestan, and kills himself in despair, after bidding the survivors to make known his unhappy story. The resemblance to *Othello*—in the unfounded jealousy of the Sultan, his reliance upon a confidant (much less interesting than Iago), his murder of the woman he loves, his remorse, and suicide—is very obvious. In the death of old Lusignan, from joy at his release and at the discovery of his long-lost children, there is, as Professor Lounsbury has pointed out, a reminiscence of *Lear*.⁸⁸ This play is usually considered to be the best of Hill's attempts; it continued to be acted at intervals for many years, and was republished in a number of editions.

Alzire was produced at Paris in January, 1736; and when Hill wrote to Voltaire in June, he had the pleasure of assuring him that the task of translating and producing it in England was nearly complete. His bookseller had sent him the French play about three weeks before; he had lost no time in adapting it for representation; and the actors were already perfect in their parts. Haste, he explained to Voltaire, had been necessary—"to protect you from a winter storm of mercenary pens, that, tempted by your *Zaïre*'s success, were threatening to disjoint *Alzira*."⁸⁹ It was acted on June 18, 1736, at Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, and had a run of nine nights. The Prince of Wales honored *Alzira* with such "warm and weighty" applause that Hill was encouraged to dedicate it to him.

The prologue breathes an air of generous patronage of France:

"Rich Britain borrows, but with generous end;
Whate'er she takes from France, she takes to mend."

⁸⁸ *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, 78–80. Voltaire's indebtedness is there analyzed in detail.

⁸⁹ *Works*, I, 241.

And the *Prompter*, a few weeks before, had taken even Voltaire's private character under its protection: "I have heard a thousand petty falsehoods in disadvantage of this gentleman's private character, not one of which I have been able to believe, since first I read his writings. And yet, admitting these things truths, they ought to weigh but light against those virtues which his works have taught the public."⁹⁰ This particular work Voltaire had written to show how the true spirit of religion overcomes the natural virtues—a laudable endeavor that quite deserved the *Prompter*'s commendations. The scene is laid in Peru. Don Alvarez, a model of all the Christian virtues, and a marvel in the eyes of the Indians who have learned to expect only cruelty from Christians, delegates his power to his son, Don Carlos, who loves Alzira, daughter of the conquered Indian king. Believing her Indian lover dead, and pressed by Alvarez and by her father, she marries Carlos. Then the lover, Zamor, returns with a band of followers, makes a desperate assault upon the city, and is defeated and captured. Of course, there are moving scenes of despair between Alzira and her lover. At length Zamor attacks Carlos (behind the scenes), wounds him mortally, and is condemned, together with Alzira, to death—unless he will turn Christian. He refuses with scorn. Then Carlos, who in the rather slow process of dying from his wound has grown as mild as his father, is brought in, forgives his slayer, and expires; and Zamor, astonished at the change wrought in his enemy by Christian principle, is promptly converted, and allowed to marry Alzira.

"A moderate tragedy," is Genest's verdict. Voltaire did better when he snatched a brand from *Othello*.⁹¹ Hill translates rather more freely than in the earlier play, and

⁹⁰ No. 159, May 14, 1736.

⁹¹ As Colley Cibber expressed it in the prologue he wrote for *Zara*.

breaks up some of the long speeches of declamation; and he improves upon Voltaire by making the altars tremble at the marriage of Carlos, and Heaven draw back. Carlos, too, is more gallant than Voltaire's Gusman. Once or twice, there is unexpected music in Hill's blank verse:

“And I have lived to see my father's throne
O'erturned, and all things changed in earth and heaven.” (III)

“My taste of time is gone; and life to me
Is but an evening's walk, in rain and darkness.” (V)

The kind regard, which, up to this time, Hill had felt for Voltaire and his work, now suffered a change. Hill, anticipating Mommsen, had what Davies calls “an uncommon predilection” for the character of Caesar;⁹² it amounted, in fact, to an obsession. He believed that Caesar was wronged in the popular estimation: no error was more general or less excusable than that he was a tyrant; he was the noblest patriot of antiquity, and died a martyr to the public liberty he was accused of violating.⁹³ When, therefore, Voltaire chose to write a tragedy on Caesar, exalting the character of Brutus, Hill promptly took fire. But Voltaire did much worse—he slandered not only Caesar, but the taste of the English nation. Having found it impossible to translate for the delicate French taste all of Shakespeare's “monstrueux ouvrage” on the subject, he had written *La Mort de César* “dans le goût anglais,” to make France acquainted with the English muse. It was a tragedy without love, without even any female characters; and it exalted the love of liberty above all other passions. In these respects, it displayed “le génie et le caractère des écrivains anglais, aussi bien que celui du peuple romain.”⁹⁴

⁹² *Life of Garrick*, I, ch. 13.

⁹³ See Hill's pamphlet, *The Merit of Assassination* (1738). This defense of Caesar—quite readable on the whole—sets forth Hill's interpretation of Caesar's career.

⁹⁴ Preface to *La Mort de César*, 1736.

Brutus, the stern patriot, learns that he is the son of Caesar, but he allows no small consideration like that to alter his determination to slay the tyrant of his country. Voltaire thus represented, as Hill said, "as an example of national virtue, an inhuman and bloody enthusiast, who, having plotted to assassinate his benefactor, under suspicion or appearance of tyranny, persists in and executes the murder, even after discovering that it is upon the person of his father!"⁹⁵ He must have a mistaken idea that our country likes butchery!

To refute these slanders upon England and Caesar, Hill wrote a play of his own in 1737, retaining the tale of Brutus's parentage, but so contriving the plot that Brutus is led to disbelieve the story. The place which England would never refuse to women in tragedy is taken by Calphurnia and Portia, who interfere in state affairs in a most annoying manner. It is very curious that both Hill and Voltaire were devotedly attached to their plays on Caesar—an attachment shared by no one else. It was not until 1743 that *La Mort de César* had a hearing on the Parisian stage, and then it was coldly received; and as for *The Roman Revenge*, Hill for ten years importuned friends, managers, and actors in vain in its behalf. The French play has one striking advantage over the English one—it is very much shorter; but I shall not compare them further, for no discussion could escape the infection of their dullness.⁹⁶ When they met Caesar, both the in-

⁹⁵ Letter to Bolingbroke, June 25, 1738, *Works*, I, 270.

⁹⁶ Hill's reputation for dullness is perhaps due more than anything else to this play and to the interminable letters that he wrote about it. The following references will furnish material to anyone desirous to see how far into the domain of boredom a fixed idea can lead a man: letters to Pope, July 31, August 29, September 3, November 8, December 9, 1738 (*Works*, I, 291, 295, 301, 308, 320), and January 15, 1739 (I, 328); to Bolingbroke, June 25 and July 21, 1738 (I, 270, II, 417); to Fleetwood, 1739 (II, 13); to Mallet, December 9, 1738 (I, 323);

genious Mr. Hill and the brilliant M. Voltaire went down to defeat.

Hill's resentment of Voltaire's imputations as to the English taste in tragedy was shared by many of his countrymen, who presently began to depreciate Voltaire, and to taunt him with his Shakespearean plagiarisms. Their irritation was greatly increased by some remarks which he prefixed to his *Mérope*, published in 1744. After mentioning the introduction of a love episode into a play on the same subject produced in London in 1731,⁹⁷ he goes on: "depuis le règne de Charles II, l'amour s'était emparé du théâtre d'Angleterre; et il faut avouer qu'il n'y a point de nation au monde qui ait peint si mal cette passion. . . . Il semble que la même cause qui prive les Anglais du génie de la peinture et de la musique, leur ôte aussi celui de la tragédie."⁹⁸ Here was matter enough for wrath, and it forced more people than Hill into an "abatement of the disposition" they once had felt "to look upon him as a generous thinker."

Hill commenced reprisals by translating *Mérope*, "upon a plan as near Voltaire's as I could wring it with a safe conscience." "I undertook this piece," he tells Mallet,⁹⁹ "upon a motive more malignant than it should have been; for I but sought to mend with the bad view to mortify to Popple, September 15, October 24, 1740 (II, 67, 71); to Rich, November 4, 1742, and two undated letters (II, 3, 43, 49); to Garrick, c. 1749 (II, 154) and June 30, 1746 (II, 244). He begs Garrick to act Caesar—it will show his weight! "Caesar had more than all the weight of Cato,"—a most true observation. He also wrote to Richardson about it—Forster MSS., July 21, 1746.

⁹⁷ This was the *Merope* of George Jeffreys. See *Miscellanies in verse and prose*, by George Jeffreys, London, 1754. Hill wrote the prologue and epilogue. It is a pretty bad play.

⁹⁸ Dedication to "M. le Marquis Scipion Maffei, auteur de la *Mérope Italienne*," upon which Voltaire founded his play.

⁹⁹ September 29, 1748. *Works*, II, 345.

him." The play tells the story of Merope, widow of Cresphontes, king of Messene, murdered years before by the general Polyphontes. When the play opens, this general is trying to force the queen into a marriage with him, to secure his own power more effectively; but she hopes for the coming of the one son who had escaped the general massacre, and had been raised in safety and in ignorance of his birth by a faithful friend. This youth, upon his arrival in Messene, alone and unrecognized, is arrested for the murder of a man who had attacked him upon the road. Merope's fear that the dead man may have been her son is apparently confirmed by several suspicious circumstances, and she is about to sacrifice her own son in the supposed murderer, when the guardian opportunely arrives and reveals the truth. There is still danger from Polyphontes, but he is outwitted and slain at the sacrificial altar by the prince.

Of the changes introduced by Hill, a few may be mentioned: Voltaire's Polyphontes is the tyrant dictating terms—Hill's Polyphontes talks of love and addresses the Queen as his sister and his soul; Hill introduces some description of the Arcadian simplicity in which the prince was reared; Hill embellishes the account of the prince's prayer in the temple (II, 2) with trembling altars and glories beaming around; and he brings into the scene, where Merope attempts to sacrifice her son, a funeral song and a procession of virgins in white. There are other respects in which Hill differs from Voltaire, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse.

His translation was finished in 1745;¹⁰⁰ but not until

¹⁰⁰ Letter to Theo. Cibber, September 27, 1745, *Works*, II, 307. Cibber was in jail for debt at the time, and Hill offered *Merope* for his relief. See *A serio-comic Apology for part of the Life of Mr. Theophilus Cibber*, etc., 97-98 (1748), where Cibber acknowledges Hill's generosity. Hill's *Insolvent*, based on Massinger's *Fatal Dowry*

April 15, 1749, after many delays and many letters, did Garrick finally produce it at Drury-Lane.¹⁰¹ It had nine performances. In the Advertisement to the edition printed in the same year, Hill quoted Voltaire's remarks about the incapacity of the English for tragedy, music, and painting, and then carried the war into France: "he must pardon me, if I am sensible that our unpolished London stage . . . has entertained a nobler taste of dignified simplicity than to deprive dramatic poetry of all that animates its passions, in pursuit of a cold, starved, tame abstinence; which, from an affectation to shun figure, sinks to flatness; an elaborate escape from energy into a grovelling, wearisome, bald, barren, unalarming, chillness of expression, that emasculates the mind instead of moving it." This was a kind of "hostile style," as Hill admits, not only towards Voltaire, but towards French tragedy generally; and it illustrates the methods that were coming to be adopted by English writers, who defended Shakespeare by attacking Corneille and Racine. Hill concludes by announcing his intention shortly to publish a comparison between the French and English stages, which will convince Voltaire himself that we have better actors and finer writers. And with this flourish of trumpets, Hill's dramatic activity came to an end.

From the extent and variety of all these theatrical interests that have been related, one might expect to find and written at Cibber's request, but not acted, is the subject of some correspondence between them about April, 1746 (*Works*, II, 312 f.).

¹⁰¹ See Forster MS., Hill to Richardson, January 11, 1749, and Richardson to Hill, January 12; Hill to Garrick, January 20, March 29, July 11, and August 28, 1749 (*Works*, II, 368, 370, 375, 387); to Mallet, January 12, 1749 (II, 352); to the actor who took the part of Polyphontes, April 7 and 8, 1749 (II, 147 f.). Hill received 148 l. from three nights' benefit of the play (Hill to Mallet, May 5, 1749, *Works*, II, 361).

Hill's friends chiefly among actors, managers, and playwrights. But Hill was more than projector, more than general theatrical expert; he was also critic, essayist, letter-writer, and poet in many kinds,—epic, pindaric, amatory, satiric. Workers in any field of literary endeavor were likely to meet Mr. Hill there. Those literary connections not already treated will be taken up in the succeeding chapters, approximately in chronological order: first, the friendship with Thomson and a group of minor poets about 1725; then, that with Pope; and finally, that with Richardson.

CHAPTER V

HILL AND HIS CIRCLE ABOUT 1725

From about 1720 to 1728, Hill was a more prominent figure among contemporary writers than at any subsequent time. The general situation in the literary world and the state of his private affairs were both favorable. The deaths of Addison, Prior, and Rowe, the absence of Swift from England, the preoccupation of Pope with his work of translation, made it comparatively easy for a minor author to assume a position of some consequence. Then, these were the lean years between generous patronage of men of letters by the State, and their support by the reading public. The first two Georges were notoriously indifferent to literature; and Walpole, who came to power in 1721, was so much the "poet's foe," in Swift's phrase,¹ that by 1732 or 1733 most of these poets were in the ranks of the Opposition with Bolingbroke, employing every weapon of dramatic and personal satire against Walpole. Only more or less disreputable hack writers, like Henley ("Orator Henley"), Arnall, and Joseph Mitchell, were engaged to support the ministry. In neglect of poets, the nobility, with few exceptions, followed the example of the court. Thomson, in a letter to Mallet of September 20, 1729, points out the difficulty of securing subscriptions, inveighs bitterly against "some of our modern Goths" who have agreed among themselves to encourage no subscriptions whatever, under a penalty, and ends by damning "their corruption, their low taste, and all their stupid

¹ *Epistle to Mr. Gay*, 1731.

expense.”² It was a “fashionable expedient,” according to Hill, to return the “dedicator’s Gilt Book, with this short apology for not accepting it,—my Lord gives his service, and says he does not understand these matters”; probably they think themselves “under no obligation to pay for compliments which their conscience tells them they have no right to.”³

For any writer, himself independent of patronage, there was thus ample opportunity of generous service to less fortunate brothers. Hill was relatively independent, and he was for the moment unoccupied. His projecting fever was temporarily checked by the general discredit that overtook “bubbles” after the South Sea disaster; his latest scheme to run a theatrical company had ended in disappointment; the failure of *Henry V* had made him very pessimistic in regard to the stage; he had not yet caught sight of those Golden Groves that called him from London in 1726; and he was probably easier financially than he ever was after the York Buildings Company fiasco. In brief, he had a short interval of comparative leisure for the exercise of his pen and his benevolence.

The position of influence, thus made possible by the state of literature and of his own affairs, became an accomplished fact with the success of the *Plain Dealer*. This periodical, and Savage’s *Miscellany*, which might more appropriately have appeared under Hill’s name, will serve as convenient foci for the discussion of Hill’s literary relationships. An examination of the first will show how it served the interests of struggling writers, and gave Hill a certain status as a wit and a man of influence; and a discussion of the second will bring out further developments of the friendships indicated in the *Plain Dealer*, and will dis-

² *Philobiblon Society Miscellanies*, vol. IV.

³ *Plain Dealer*, no. 73.

play Hill as the leading spirit in the little circle of poets and versifiers who figure in its pages. One poet, James Thomson, who appears in the *Plain Dealer*, but not in the *Miscellany*, was as closely identified with the group about Hill as Mallet or Savage; but as the story of his friendship with Hill is told chiefly in their correspondence, it will be best to consider it separately. Thomson's genius has, after all, lifted him out of this group of his contemporaries, and given him the right to separate mention.

Hill's brief connection with the *British Apollo* in 1708 had not been followed up by active interest in any of the periodicals and newspapers that multiplied with bewildering rapidity after the success of the *Tatler*. The mortality among them was great: some, like Addison's *Whig Examiner*, did not survive beyond a few numbers, but new ones sprang up immediately in their places. Aside from the papers that confined themselves to news items and advertisements of books and drugs,⁴ most of these journals were frankly political. This is not surprising, in view of the stirring events of the years from 1710 to 1725,—the ministry of Harley and Bolingbroke, the treaty with France, the accession of the Hanover line, the impeachment of the fallen ministers, the Jacobite rebellion, the dissensions among the Whig leaders, the South Sea panic, and the Atterbury conspiracy. Before 1715, the *Examiner*, the *Review*, the *Mercator*, the *Guardian*, the *Englishman*, engaged the talents of Swift, Defoe, Addison, Steele, and other writers of importance. From that time until, in 1727, Bolingbroke became identified with the *Craftsman*, the political papers are dreary reading,—dulness, scandal, invective, indecency, and bigotry, unrelieved by talent. Occasionally, periodicals appeared with other than political aims: Theobald's *Censor*, for instance, with some essays of

⁴ The *Post-Boy* is an example.

interest and merit; the *Doctor*, offering instruction in manners and morals; the *Instructor*, which abandoned the attempt to reform mankind after six numbers; the *Free-Thinker*, edited by Ambrose Phillips and others. Of these only the last can bear comparison with Hill's paper, and it had ceased before the appearance of the first number of the *Plain Dealer*. In 1724-5, Hill had to himself the field of the periodical of miscellaneous essays after the *Spectator* pattern, and he produced one of the very few readable collections between the *Spectator* and the *Rambler*.

Characteristically, he undertook the *Plain Dealer*, with William Bond, as a charitable enterprise—"for the advantage of an unhappy gentleman (an old officer in the army)."⁵ It came out twice a week, from March 23, 1724, to May 7, 1725, and was designed not only to entertain, but to advance learning, virtue, and politeness. Bond, in dedicating the second edition (1734) to Lord Hervey, his relative, refers mysteriously to the genius concerned with him in the undertaking, whose name he is not at liberty to reveal; and he devotes most of the dedication to extravagant praise of the unknown and to nauseous flattery of Hervey. As an essayist, the genius bears comparison with Addison: "He is everywhere remarkable for the same propriety, both as to words and thoughts; he is as refined, polite, easy, and genteel a writer, as graceful and familiar, as sublime and as facetious, as sharp and as sprightly, as smooth and as strong, as pathetic and concise at times, and yet, at times, as copious too and as fluent, as learned and sententious, in fine as full of all kinds of seasonings and ornaments" as the subjects require. He thus combines in himself all the desirable (and contradictory) qualities of all the essayists who ever wrote.

A eulogy less comprehensive would be more useful as a

⁵ Cibber's *Lives*, V, 264.

guide to the authorship of the separate papers. According to the traditional witticism ascribed to Savage, Hill and Bond wrote by turns six numbers, and the quality of the production was observed so regularly to rise during Hill's weeks and fall during Bond's that Savage nicknamed them "the contending powers of light and darkness."⁶ Unfortunately, this easy solution of the question of authorship does not stand examination. Perhaps the first twenty-four numbers were enough to inspire Savage's remark: in the first group of six nothing suggests Hill; in the second, three are in his style; in the third, none; in the fourth, at least two are unquestionably his. But from there on, difficulties increase: Nos. 25-30 should be Bond's, but three are certainly Hill's; and so it goes through the rest of the one hundred and seventeen papers. Fairly reliable evidence of authorship lies in autobiographical references; in an exclamatory style full of "bold experiments in language";⁷ in sentiments typical of Hill on projects, or the stage, or Caesar; in quotations from his poems; and in praise of the work of his friends. By these tests, fully one-half fall to his share. Other collaborators have been suggested,—Savage, in the catalogue of the Hope Collection at the Bodleian, and Young, by his biographer, M. Thomas. Those papers that are undoubtedly Hill's, however, are of so pronounced a quality, compared with many that may or may not be his, that they clearly give to the *Plain Dealer* such individuality as it has.

A survey of the contents reveals obvious imitations of the *Spectator*: for instance, the description of the group of people (Patty Amble, Ned Volatile, Sir Portly Rufus, Major Stedfast, and so on,) who figure in the first and some subsequent papers; the account of the death of Sir Portly;

⁶ Johnson's *Lives*, ed. G. B. Hill, II, 341, n. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 340.

a reverie in Westminster Abbey; reflections upon witchcraft and petty superstitions.⁸ Somewhat in the *Spectator* style are the discussions on manners and morals,—masquerades, gambling, short wigs, excessive drinking, stock-jobbing, riding-habits, moustaches, and like matters.⁹ There are dissertations, usually illustrated by a story either too obvious to be interesting or too irrelevant to be enlightening,¹⁰ on good-breeding and politeness, true and false wit, true and false decency, patriotism, duelling, friendship, and party spirit.¹¹ Sometimes correspondents (probably invented for the occasion) dream dreams and feel unaccountably obliged to tell Mr. Plain Dealer about them; or ask his advice in their silly love difficulties.¹² There are invectives against narrow and petty notions of trade —there speaks the projector; against unmerited respect paid to mere rank; and against “double-entendre,” —a remonstrance that would be more effective if the Plain Dealer did not himself now and then indulge in a form of wit unpleasantly characteristic of the age.¹³ Most of the papers are neither better nor worse than second-rate imitations of the *Spectator* manner; but a few are for some reason or other interesting enough to deserve particular mention.

No. 12, expressing vigorous disapproval of capital punishment for insignificant crimes, is typical of Hill's humanity. A man, he notes, is infinitely more valuable than his beast or his furniture; he cannot bear to see the execution of poor wretches who perhaps stole to avoid starvation. That human life is worth more than property

⁸ Nos. 8, 13, 19, 117; no. 79; no. 42; no. 93.

⁹ Nos. 2, 4, 33, 39, 41, 112, 113.

¹⁰ For example, nos. 9 and 35.

¹¹ Nos. 5, 6, 8, 11, 31, 44.

¹² Nos. 26, 43, 47, 58, 78, 81.

¹³ Nos. 30, 85; 38; 7; 64, 76.

is not yet fully recognized either in or out of the law-courts; but the atrocious penal code, against which he declaims in the following paragraph, has disappeared:

“I am convinced that if it were possible to see on some such plain as that of Salisbury, under one assembled prospect, the whole number of men and women who have been executed for theft only, in all the counties of this kingdom, within the memory of any person of but a moderate advance in years,—such a dreadful demonstration of the waste which is made by this sweep of the sword of justice would be a startling inducement to those, whose province it is known to be, to weigh with pity and deliberation, whether punishments more adequate and more politic, too, than death, might not easily be appropriated to a number of petty crimes, which ever were and ever must be unavoidably frequent in all peopled places; being the necessary consequences either of the wants or the depravity of the lowest part of the human species.”¹⁴

No. 30 gives a lively picture of the opposition to inoculation. This prejudice against a manifestly beneficial thing is to Hill merely another instance of a trait of his countrymen which he had sad occasion to note only too often,—their fixed aversion to novelty. The arguments against the practice are as amusing as those of the Boyars of Russia, who opposed the Czar’s design of a canal between the Volga and the Tanais on the ground of its impiety—God had not made the rivers to run together. Hill is prodigal of facts as well as exclamations about the effects of inoculation, and he compliments Lady Mary Wortly Montagu by quoting, with a very fair amount of commendation, his own poem to her.¹⁵

¹⁴ No. 80 is on a similar subject—a remonstrance against exploiting crime by writing up the lives of criminals.

¹⁵ In “George Paston’s” *Lady Montagu and her Times*, 305, this paper is claimed, but without any proof, for Mary Astell; and Hill’s poem is assumed to be hers, though it is included in his *Works*. A mere impression scarcely justifies the ascription.

No. 69 is a paper on Woman's Rights, conceived as a theme for infinite jest. Even Patty Amble herself was probably amused at her own oratory: "How are we represented, when none of our sex are permitted to sit and vote for us? Is this free government? Is this to be subject to no laws but those we have first given consent to? Either let us as a distinct body have a right to govern ourselves; or admit an equal number of us to sit where laws are made for us. And I believe I may venture to undertake . . . that we will be modest enough in that case, to content ourselves with a bare negative upon all bills that concern us." It is interesting to see a joke become in a couple of centuries a great political problem; no bare negative will satisfy the Patty Ambles of today.¹⁶

Several papers upon love must be noticed because of this interesting statement in Bond's dedication: the author whose name he conceals differs from almost all of the greatest wits in his treatment of love; "he writes of love with as much decency as a good divine performs the most solemn ceremony belonging to it, and yet expresses as warmly and as naturally all the true delicacies and rejoissances of it" as any lover could wish; "every thought and every expression is masterly, moving, but yet in such a way as is most mannerly and modest; a vestal may read it without a blush," and yet will chastely desire to change her state and feel an "honest commotion." To examine the essays in question, with this frightful commendation in mind, reveals nothing very startling except a comparative absence of indecency in the discussion of the love affairs of correspondents. Several papers are little more than extracts from Hill's poem, *The Picture of Love*,—a harmless bit of verse, written of course in an exaggerated vein

¹⁶ Fielding wrote several papers in the *Champion* (January and May, 1740), in much the same spirit as this of Hill's.

and expressing what Hill conceived to be rapture. No. 45 adds to the poetical rhapsody one in prose: a lover is like a god! "He has the prophet's sacred privilege to be rapped [sic] out of himself. . . . Lovers converse like angels, by a kind of intuition! They hear one another's souls and prevent each other's wishes. Like divinities quitting their shrines, they disrobe themselves of their bodies, and intermingle their meeting minds, as we see two lights incorporate. Their souls glide out from their eyes, to snatch embraces at a distance," and so on. This is absurd enough to cause an honest commotion. But thoughts like the following, while not remarkable, are yet rare in a period when cynical jests about love were far more usual than raptures: "I am fond of thinking we might draw from love a proof of the soul's immortality. . . . Why else are the joys of love mixed with melancholy and unsatisfied tremblings? These increase, indeed, and refine the pleasure. But they convince us that there is a union more adapted to our mind's free essence, and which our bodies are not fine enough to permit them the enjoyment of."

This somewhat lengthy survey of the *Plain Dealer* is justified, if it has suggested a reason for the paper's success. That it did win a fair degree of notice and favor is indicated by its republication in 1730 and again in 1734. The editor of a successful periodical could grant or withhold favors, and it was characteristic of Hill to delight in granting them. He encouraged the work of his friends, and he made new friends by his hospitality to hitherto unknown genius.

Among the friends praised in the *Plain Dealer* was Edward Young. That Hill had been interested in Young's work as far back as 1719 is proved by his MS. notes in the Bodleian copy of the *Paraphrase of a Part of the Book of Job*. These observations are not numerous: often merely a star of commendation after such lines as "strikes the dis-

tant hills with transient light," or comments like "absurd," "frightful anticlimax," "nonsense," after such a couplet as

"The spotted plagues that marked his limbs all o'er
So thick with pains, they wanted room for more."

The criticisms, comparatively trifling as they are, indicate to M. Thomas that Hill had grasped "le véritable intérêt de cette nouvelle composition de notre auteur, à savoir le progrès sensible de la forme et parfois même la perfection du style."¹⁷ Any testimony by a modern scholar to Hill's acuteness in literary criticism is worth noting. If unacquainted at this time, the two writers may have met in 1719 or 1721, when Young's plays, *Busiris* and *The Revenge*, were acted by Hill's friends at Drury-Lane.

Of Young's movements from 1723 to 1727 few details are known, except that he was in London; M. Thomas suggests that he wrote for reviews—perhaps even for the *Plain Dealer*: "C'est là que nous croyons retrouver la trace des méditations, assez sombres désormais, de notre auteur. En effet, il y paraît nombre d'articles sur des sujets qui lui tenaient à cœur."¹⁸ He instances as probably Young's work no. 32, made up of reflections on death. As the meditations are such as might be inspired in any sensitive mind by the transitoriness of life, and are expressed in terms not beyond any writer with a gift for the obvious, and as they are illustrated by one of Hill's poems,¹⁹ it seems a little unnecessary to ascribe them to Young. To ask "what has become of all those busy bustlers who have lived and died before us?" or to picture the body as a prison for the soul, released finally by death, might occur to Hill as well as to Young. And Hill might even express such ideas rather well, for his style occasionally has literary

¹⁷ W. Thomas, *Le Poète Edward Young*, 327.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁹ *To Clelia, Works*, IV, 55.

flavor. This passage—one of the best in the essay—is not beyond him: “When we die, those we leave are a number very small and inconsiderable in comparison with those we go to. The Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the heroic conquerors, the shining poets of antiquity, and the whole assembled congress of long known and glorious characters, who have flourished from the world’s creation, are to be the company to whose familiar converse Death will introduce us.”²⁰

Three other papers that suggest Young to his biographer are still less likely to be his.²¹ On the whole, the evidence of Young’s collaboration on the *Plain Dealer* is of the slenderest sort. On the other hand, whether or not Hill was returning a favor, as M. Thomas suggests, he devotes

²⁰ M. Thomas gives as a parallel passage Alonzo’s soliloquy at the beginning of the last scene of Act IV of his *Revenge*: “It is death joins us to the great majority,” etc. The parallelisms in phrase are not striking.

²¹ No. 87: a letter discussing the place of passion in poetry, and the value of the Bible as a source of inspiration, furnishes a text for the editor’s comments, illustrated by long quotations from Dennis; Hill was in the habit of quoting Dennis in matters of criticism; the paper concludes with Hill’s metrical version of *Habakkuk*; only the letter, then, could be the work of Young. No. 111 (misprinted 116 in M. Thomas’s book): most of this exhortation to consider the sun and the stars and the wonder of them, and reflect whether or not they prove the contrivance of an infinite architect, is quoted from the “author of the excellent discourse *The Religion of Nature Delineated*,”—Dr. Wollaston, who died in 1724 (8th ed., 1759, 142 f.); and certain “beaux vers sur le système de Newton” are stanzas II and XVIII of Hill’s *Judgment Day*. No. 67: this contains a eulogy of the Duke of Chandos, “avec lequel Young aura des relations plus tard”; it is a paper in Hill’s most projecting spirit, showing the Royal African Company how much more they would gain by using their negroes to cultivate the land in Africa, instead of transporting them; there is no impossibility in this design, except to “narrow and confined understandings and spirits of a heavy fabric”; as the Duke of Chandos was connected with the company, the eulogy was pertinent.

two numbers to Young's First and Second Satires, quoting from them, and praising one as the work of some considerable genius, and the other as full of the liveliest energy.²² Young must have appreciated such friendly advertising.²³

Dennis, also, who figures prominently in the *Plain Dealer*, must have been an acquaintance of long standing, though in no intimate sense. Hill often showed, both by word and by deed, his high estimate of Dennis's criticism. It was to Dennis and Gildon that in 1716 he dedicated his *Fatal Vision*; precisely because they were severe and watchful critics, they best deserved the labor of the Muses. Dedications to men of letters were almost unknown at the time; this of Hill's was not epoch-making, as was Pope's to Congreve a little later, simply because the *Fatal Vision* was not epoch-making. But it was an interesting departure from prevailing custom.

To the influence of Dennis's ideas may perhaps be ascribed Hill's fondness for Scriptural paraphrase; it has been pointed out that he versified nearly all of Dennis's favorite passages in the Old Testament.²⁴ Dennis was known for his insistence on emotion as the basis of poetry,

²² Nos. 92 and 110. From the First Satire, ll. 129-142, 255-264 are quoted; from the Second, ll. 213 f.

²³ Pleasant relations with Hill continued for a time at least, for it was at Young's house that Pope and Hill first met, perhaps about 1730-31 (Pope to Hill, October 29, 1731. *Col.* of 1751); but they probably ceased after Young's settlement at Welwyn. Hill referred to the *Night Thoughts* in a rather discriminating criticism (Hill to Richardson, July 24, 1744. *Corres.*, I, 102): "As to Dr. Young, I know and love the merit of his moral meanings; but am sorry that he overflows his banks, and will not remind himself (when he has said enough upon his subject), that it is then high time to stop. He has beauties scattered up and down in his *Complaints* that, had he not so separated them by lengths of cooling interval, had been capable of carrying into future ages such a fire as few past ones ever equalled. What a pity want should be derived from superfluity!"

²⁴ H. G. Paul, *John Dennis*, 204, n. 24.

and on the Bible rather than the classics as a source of inspiration; he stood "as an advocate of the exaltation and inspiration of the poet, that so ill accorded with the prevailing spirit of the times that he was derisively dubbed Sir Longinus."²⁵ Hill undoubtedly agreed with these views, for he preached rapture and enthusiasm in his critical remarks as diligently as he tried to display them in his poetry.²⁶ One illustration of his paraphrases, for which he employed chiefly Pindaric verse, will be sufficient. *Plain Dealer* no. 74 makes some disparaging comments on the paraphrases sung in churches, and commends the poet, whose version of the 104th psalm is about to be quoted, for keeping his eye on the "sense and dignity of the original." "Nothing can be more unlike the thoughts of David than what we sing as his in most of our churches." Surely nothing can be more unlike the thoughts of David than this:

"Lightnings in millions sweep his fiery way,
And round his paths in blue meanders play;"

or this:

"But the proud mountains which ambitious grow,
And viewing heaven disdain the world below,
Nor will to humble brooks refreshment owe,
Sip the moist clouds and cool their heads in snow."²⁷

²⁵ Paul's *Dennis*, 134.

²⁶ The list of his poems inspired by the Scriptures includes the *Creation*, the *Judgment Day*, paraphrases of the 104th, 107th, 114th, and part of the 55th psalms, a portion of Habakkuk, chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew, part of II Kings, part of ch. 16 in Exodus, and the Lord's Prayer. The first two were published separately in 1720 and 1721; several of the others first appeared in the *Plain Dealer*, and Savage's *Miscellany*; they were all reprinted in Hill's *Works*, vols. III and IV.

²⁷ Thomson's version of the same psalm is at least as bad as Hill's, though less rapturous:

"That man may be sustained beneath the toil
Of manuring the ill-producing soil." (Aldine ed., II, 142).

Hill also undertook, perhaps about 1716, an epic on Gideon—in twelve books of irregular Pindaric verse. It was complete in MS. in 1724,²⁸ but only three books, apparently, were ever published, and these not until 1749. It was provided with all the proper epic material,—descriptions, similes, episodes,²⁹ single combats, battles, visions, debates, and miracles; and adorned by Hill's "inimitable style,"—a style characterized by an astonishing collection of adjectives in -y, -ive, -ful: speary, beamy, curvy, sheltry, grovy, druggy, embry, flashful, scopeful, feastful, retortive, revertive.³⁰ Still, even in Hill's version, the interest of the narrative is not quite lost. One wonders whether Dennis was among the few enemies or the many admirers of *Gideon*.³¹

Several *Plain Dealers* merely honor Dennis by quotation from his works,³² but two numbers mingle their praise with practical appeals in his behalf. In connection with the proposals for Dennis's *Miscellaneous Tracts*,³³ Hill observes (no. 54) that the length of the subscription list to Pope's *Homer* is no proof of the age's partiality to poets, for Pope has so many friends that to be out of the list is to be out of

²⁸ In a letter to "Clio" of April 9, 1724 (*Works*, I, 24), he promises to have the twelve books "writ fair."

²⁹ *Sareph and Hamar*, *Works*, IV, 243; *Oreb and Joash*, *Prompter* No. 59; *Burning of the Bridge*, from book VIII, *Prompter* No. 76.

³⁰ Thomson, of course, employs many such adjectives, but less generously than Hill; and Savage is guilty of heapy, chippy, foodful, and so on in his *Excursion*. Dyer bears away the palm, when he speaks of the "abstersive" gums of sheep (in his *Fleece*, I), and of rubbing their mouths with "detersive bay salt."

³¹ Cibber's *Lives*, V, 261: "Gideon had its enemies, but many more admirers."

³² No. 57 (from the *Observations on Paradise Lost*); No. 87 (from his "noble dress" of the 18th psalm); Nos. 60 and 96 (from private letters).

³³ The *Proposals* first appeared in 1721; the *Tracts* were published in 1727.

fashion. "But let me see these shining names to Mr. Dennis's *Miscellaneous Tracts*, which he is now publishing by a subscription scarce the sixth part so chargeable, and I will afterwards suppose that they can read as well as purchase."³⁴ A few months later, Dennis's circumstances were such that Rich offered him a benefit at Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, and the *Plain Dealer* (no. 82) comes out strongly in support of the plan. Prejudice and stupidity alone, Hill declares, are responsible for the general insensibility to Dennis's merits. Young writers, in terror of his austerity, think him ill-natured when he is only impartial; an enemy to wit and learning when he is an enemy only to the profaners of them. They should recognize that where there is art, there must be criticism. He makes a final plea to the brave and beautiful to appear in the cause of wisdom at the benefit performance.³⁵

Hill's interest in Dennis seems to have been due to sincere admiration of his qualifications as a critic, and to sincere sympathy for him in his distress; and not to strong personal feeling, or to gratitude for any reciprocal attentions. After Dennis's death, a short poem (unsigned, but later included in Hill's *Works*)³⁶ appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*,³⁷ and was afterwards chosen by the author of the *Life of Mr. John Dennis* to adorn his hearse in a "fragrant manner." This elegy, "wiredrawn in less

³⁴ In this paper Hill goes on to speak of the value of criticism, using Dennis's comments on Blackmore as an illustration, and praising his *Te Deum* at the expense of Blackmore's hymn, *Hail, King Supreme*. Had Blackmore buoyed himself up by criticism, "he could never have sunk so soon and so shamefully as to tell us in the fourth verse that he who is supreme in power is controlled by no superior." This, and several other examples of the art of sinking, read like an anticipation of the *Treatise on the Bathos*.

³⁵ *The Old Bachelor*, given for Dennis's benefit, January 4, 1725.

³⁶ 1754 ed., III, 421.

³⁷ January, 1732.

than a fortnight's time," according to this author, "from the brain of the very pink of courtesy and poesy," apostrophizes Dennis as "unsocial excellence," and goes on:

"Want, the grim recompense of truth like thine,
Shall now no longer dim thy destined shine.
Th' impatient envy, the disdainful air,
The front malignant, and the captious stare,
The furious petulance, the jealous start,
The mist of frailties that obscured thy heart,
Veiled in thy grave, shall unremembered lie,
For these were parts of Dennis born to die!"

But his nobler qualities will "engage the slow gratitude of time."³⁸

These lines prove that Hill by no means overlooked the faults of Dennis's character; though he did not suffer personally from his attacks, he recognized that they were often unjustified, as in the case of Steele.³⁹ And when Pope, in the course of one of the defenses of his own perfectly disinterested character which he was in the habit of making to Hill, complains of the unkind construction Mr. Dennis is putting upon his efforts to work up a subscription for him, Hill's reply is at once a fair estimate of Dennis, and a delicate rebuke of Pope: "Where a man's passions are too strong for his virtues, his suspicion will be too hard for his prudence. He has often been weak enough to treat you in a manner that moves too much indignation against himself not to leave it unnecessary for you also to punish him. Neither of us would choose him for a friend; but none of the frailties of his temper, any more than the heavy formalities of his style, can prevent your acknowl-

³⁸ The "pink of courtesy" appreciated neither the compliment nor the biography, which he called (*Prompter* no. 48) a "silly and malicious pamphlet."

³⁹ Hill to Victor, February 21, 1723 (*Victor's Hist. of the Theatres*, II, 172).

edging there is often weight in his arguments, and matter that deserves encouragement to be met with in his writings.''⁴⁰

Neither Young nor Dennis, though both were praised in the *Plain Dealer*, and both were friends of its author, were in the more intimate circle. They were older than Hill—Dennis considerably so—and already well-known. It was in assisting the younger, still obscure writers, that Hill had the best chance to display his judgment and good-nature. The most creditable of his deeds was his encouragement of Thomson's first efforts to gain a hearing in London; but before that, he had played fairy godmother to two of Thomson's fellow-countrymen.

It was from Scotchmen that poetry received, just at this time, a fresh impulse. The publication of the *Seasons* signified a virtual rediscovery of nature; as a theme for poetry, its possibilities had been almost entirely overlooked for thirty or forty years. Then, interest in the literature of the past—another neglected source of inspiration—was fostered by a Scotchman, Allan Ramsay, whose selections from early Scotch verse showed his own appreciation and stimulated others.⁴¹ In view of these facts, it would be pleasant to find in Hill's prompt welcome of Mallet and Thomson a proof of unusual critical discernment; and much might be cited in support of this notion. Unfortunately, his welcome of Joseph Mitchell, which was just as enthusiastic, prompts the reflection that it was the needy poet, rather than the new impulse, that he saw coming from Scotland. Hill did realize, however, that interest in literature had awakened in Edinburgh, and he called the attention of his readers to a club among the students of the

⁴⁰ Pope to Hill, February 5, and Hill to Pope, February 10, 1731, *Col. of 1751*.

⁴¹ Ramsay published *Christ's Kirk on the Green* in 1716; his *Evergreen* (1724) gave examples of Scotch poems before 1600.

University,—the Grotesque Club, founded to encourage, in the words of one of its own members, “friendship that knows no strife, but that of a generous emulation to excel in virtue, learning, and politeness.” This is only one of the indications that the Muses and Graces have visibly fixed themselves in the learned seminaries of the North.⁴² Among the members of the club were Mallet, Thomson—“that dull fellow whom Malcolm calls the jest of our club”⁴³—and perhaps the Joseph Mitchell for whom Hill wrote his *Fatal Extravagance*.

About the life of Mitchell, the first of the Scotch group to come to London, little definite is known, and that not much to his credit. His friends are said not to have been solicitous to preserve the circumstances of his career; he was “a slave to his pleasures,” and extravagant to an extent that forced him to be “perpetually skulking” to elude his numerous creditors.⁴⁴ At least as early as October, 1720, he was in London.⁴⁵ In 1721, his *Ode on the Power of Music* was advertised in the second edition of Hill’s *Judgment Day*, and he himself singled out in the preface as the “young gentleman of Edinburgh” at whose request the poem was written. This reference puts the beginning of his acquaintance with Hill back some months at least before March, 1721, the date of the preface. Hill is certain that his “late admirable attempts in poetry make it needless to tell the world what they are to hope from his great genius.”

Mitchell himself, fearful lest the world may not share Hill’s opinion, consoles himself, in the Advertisement to his *Ode*, with the reflection: “In company with the incompa-

⁴² *Plain Dealer*, no. 46.

⁴³ Mallet to Ker, July 31, 1727.

⁴⁴ Cibber’s *Lives*, IV, 347 f.

⁴⁵ Mallet to Ker, October 5, 1720,—“Mitchell, author of *Lugubres Cantus*, now in London.” *European Mag.*, XXIII.

rable Mr. Hill (whose unrivalled Muse he [the author] follows at a distance, and to whom he professes himself singularly obliged) he is prepared to suffer the worst treatment this age can give, with a pleasure that he could not enjoy in the bubble of popular applause.” Not a very tactful remark; for however stoically Mr. Hill might endure the worst treatment from the public, he by no means expected to receive it. In the poem itself is a tribute to Hill by the name he bore among his admirers:

“ Music religious thoughts inspires,
And kindles bright poetic fires;
Fires! such as great Hillarius raise (Aaron Hill, Esq.)
Triumphant in their blaze!
Amid the vulgar versifying throng
His genius with distinction show,
And o'er our popular metre lift his song,
High as the Heavens are arched o'er Orbs below.”

Hillarius raised by fire to so exalted a station, and ill-treated by his age, is surely placed by his Scotch friend in a most uncomfortable position. Mitchell cannot speak of him except in flaming terms:⁴⁶ he is “sublimely fired”; he sets burning worlds before our eyes; his interior worth blazes in his breast; and his heat first melted Mitchell’s “cogenial frost.”⁴⁷ What frost could withstand it? No eulogy of the man who had relieved his distress, by letting him claim the authorship as well as the proceeds of a successful play, could be too fervent.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Hill perhaps deserved them. He notes (preface to *Judgment Day*) that in the *Creation* he had confined himself to the Mosaic account; but he needed the whole Planetary System for the Conflagration.

⁴⁷ See *The Muse's Original*, published in 1729, but probably written about 1721, as it is said in Cibber's *Lives* to have been among the first of his poems.

⁴⁸ *The Fatal Extravagance* was performed April 21, 1721.

Hill did not fail to put in a word for Mitchell in the *Plain Dealer*: he quotes from the *Ode to Music*, and he devotes an entire number to exclamatory commendation of the "North British Muse," whose poems, to Lady Somerville and on the death of the Countess of Grantham, are quoted.⁴⁹ They appear in Mitchell's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1729), in company with further expressions of gratitude to Hill; one poem thanks him for "brassing his Muse's brow." Perhaps the state of the brow of Mitchell's muse is illustrated by his requests to Walpole in several of these poems: a modest suggestion that he would like the governorship of Duck Island in St. James's Park is followed up by a demand, first to be made poet-laureate, and then secretary of state for Scotland.

The presence of both the Hills, together with Dyer and Victor, among the subscribers to the 1729 volume, indicates the continuance of an acquaintance intimate enough to include tea-parties with Clio and Miranda (Mrs. Hill). But even at the time of these amicable tea-drinkings (about 1726, or earlier),⁵⁰ Mitchell was not acceptable to some of the group; to Thomson, he was "that planet-blasted fool,"⁵¹ and there is a well-known exchange of courtesies between the two poets over the merits of *Winter*.⁵² Later on, when he had earned his title of "Sir Robert Walpole's poet," he must have been still less popular among his former friends

⁴⁹ Nos. 36 and 71.

⁵⁰ A poem in the volume refers to them; Hill was in Scotland much of the time between 1726 and 1729.

⁵¹ Philobiblon Society *Miscellanies*, IV, 27. Thomson to Mallet.

⁵² Mitchell sent back the MS. of the poem with these lines:

"Beauties and faults so thick lie scattered here,
Those I could read, if these were not so near."

Thomson replied with equal politeness:

"Why not all faults, injurious Mitchell! why
Appears one beauty to thy blasted eye?" etc.

in the Opposition. There is nothing to show how Hill himself regarded the career of his promising North Briton after 1729.

It was to David Mallet that Thomson confided his unflattering opinion of Mitchell, and perhaps Mallet then shared it. But a few years before, while still in Scotland, Mallet had watched Mitchell's proceedings in London with great interest. He noted the success of his tragedy; he read "with a great deal of pleasure" one canto of his heroi-comical poem, *The Cudgell*; and he heard that he was "in a very fair character at London, . . . valued by several of the greatest wits, as Mr. Pope, Mr. Watts, Mr. Hill, etc." Not until he secured an appointment as tutor in the Montrose family, however, did Mallet himself come to London; he was a more canny person than Mitchell or Thomson, and seems never to have been in uncomfortable straits. He always played his cards well, if not always quite scrupulously. But though he had provided for his subsistence, he had his literary reputation yet to make.

He brought with him, when he came to London about August, 1723, a ballad which he had already shown to Allan Ramsay, for Ramsay's poem—*To David Malloch on his Departure from Scotland*⁵³—refers to him as

"He that could in tender strains
Raise Margaret's plaining shade,
And paint distress that chills the veins,
While William's crimes are red."

The discovery, in 1871⁵⁴ and 1878, of two broadsides, the latter bearing a revenue stamp of the year 1711, has proved that some unknown earlier poet had raised Margaret's shade and painted her distress in terms Mallet paid him the compliment of adopting almost verbatim. The broadside,

⁵³ Published in 1723.

⁵⁴ This copy is in the British Museum, Col. 1876, folio 107.

probably itself based on an older version known at least as far back as the time of Beaumont and Fletcher, is entitled *William and Margaret, an Old Ballad*. It has been suggested that Mallet secured a copy from one of the travelling chapmen in Scotland; it must have been unfamiliar, except to the class reached by the chapmen, to enable Mallet to impose it on his contemporaries as his own. The precise way in which he went about it is not clear. He may have sent the ballad anonymously to the *Plain Dealer*; he may have arranged with the editor to have it published anonymously; or it may have come into Hill's hands through one of the scattered broadsides, and been first printed without Mallet's knowledge.

In the 36th number of the *Plain Dealer*, Hill announces his intention of unveiling obscure merit, and after a fling or two at the poor judgment displayed by men of quality and at the present low state of wit, he eulogizes the muse of our ancestors in the following picturesque terms: "The slender shape of the modern Muse is made for becoming the hoop-petticoat; but there was a charming majestic nakedness in that nervous simplicity and plain soundness of pathetic nature which went to the hearts of our forefathers, without stopping at their fancy, or winding itself into their understanding through a maze of mystical prettinesses." All this is prefatory to praise of the old ballads, and particularly of *William and Margaret*. This and another ballad he found on the torn leaf of one of the halfpenny miscellanies known as "garlands," which he picked up on Primrose Hill. Who the author of "this melancholy piece of finished poetry" is he does not know, but it has a touch of Homer's sublimity. In fact, "such ballads were the reverend fragments of disjointed Homer, when they were sung about the streets of the Grecian cities, before Lycurgus [sic] caused the limbs to be assembled into union; and so pieced,

redeemed, and consecrated them to the end of time.” He pleases himself with the idea that Shakespeare might have written it—it has his “peculiar, solemn power to touch this churchyard terror, very visible in the ghost of this ballad.” He discusses the poem in detail: the description of the lady “judiciously detains” the reader and allows the picture to sink in, so that when she opens her speech with the sharp summons “Awake!” we are prepared to know and pity her; “nothing was ever juster, or more strikingly imagined, than this comparison of the ghost’s face to an April sky (which is at best but faintly shining, and is here made fainter still by a scattering cloud which dims it),—to the shadow, as it were, . . . of a light not visible.” Altogether, “it is a plain and noble masterpiece of the natural way of writing.”

Were Primrose Hill and the halfpenny garland a literary device, or did the ballad really come to Hill in some such way as he describes? The fact that he took the liberty of altering “an obsolete low phrase here and there”—thus doing his little best to destroy that simplicity he so much admired⁵⁵—lends some support to his account: he would be less likely to tamper with the work of a living (even if

⁵⁵ The different versions of the first lines of the ballad are interesting: in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*—

“When it was grown to dark midnight,
And all were fast asleep”—

in the broadside—

“When all was wrapt in dark midnight,
And all were fast asleep”—

in the *Plain Dealer*—

“When Hope lay hushed in silent night,
And Woe was wrapt in sleep”—

in Mallet’s later versions—

“ ’Twas in the silent solemn hour,
When night and morning meet.”

anonymous) author than with a ballad he believed ancient. But whether Mallet had planned the publication or not, he found the moment propitious to write to the *Plain Dealer* and claim the poem so glowingly advertised. In the 46th number, Hill, overjoyed to find it the work of a young North Briton, congratulates Scotland on the possession of a rising genius, whose fine qualities include, if not unconsciousness of his own merit, at least sincere modesty concerning it. He then quotes the letter sent by the modest young genius, who, after expressing surprise and pleasure that a "simple tale of his writing" should merit the approbation of the *Plain Dealer*, relates the unhappy accident on which he declares he based the story,—the betrayal and death of a young lady whose lover refused to marry her.⁵⁶ The verse quoted by Merrythought in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* suggested to him a ballad treatment of the tragedy:

"These lines, naked of ornament, and simple as they are, struck my fancy. I closed the book, and bethought myself that the unhappy adventure I have mentioned above, which then came fresh into my mind, might naturally raise a tale upon the appearance of this ghost. It was then midnight. All around me was still and quiet. These concurring circumstances worked my soul to a powerful melancholy. I could not sleep; and at that time I finished my little poem, such as you see it here."

Mallet complained that his letter was printed "without his privacy" and "altered in some places for the worst."⁵⁷ This sounds disingenuous—he could scarcely have had any other motive in sending it except that of having it published, and the injury it suffered through alteration was probably a trifle compared with the substantial benefit of the advertisement. So artistic and circumstantial a nar-

⁵⁶ The lover and the lady were both identified by later critics.

⁵⁷ Mallet to Ker, October 17, 1724.

rative no doubt delighted Hill beyond measure, and increased his enthusiasm for poem and author. The ballad, introduced under such favorable auspices, became popular, and was reprinted in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*,⁵⁸ in the *Hive*,⁵⁹ and in other collections, with variations that have furnished a pleasant little problem for later critics.⁶⁰ Mallet's reputation was made.⁶¹

Had Mallet been persecuted as well as talented, Hill's support would have been even more enthusiastic than it was. Richard Savage was both: he not only wrote a tragedy, but claimed to be the unhappy hero of one; and the story he told was one to call forth the most heart-felt sympathy from a man like Hill, and even from the far more strong-minded Dr. Johnson.

Just when Hill and Savage first became acquainted is

⁵⁸ Vol. II (1724).

⁵⁹ Vol. I (2d ed., 1724).

⁶⁰ For details of the discussion of the ballad and of Mallet's authorship see the following: *Notes and Queries*, 7th S., II, 4, 132, 410, 490; *The Roxburgh Ballads*, III, 667 f.; *The Antiquary*, I, 8, 95, 140 (March, 1880); Art. on Mallet in the *Dict. of Nat. Biography*.

⁶¹ His talent and skill were sufficient to maintain this reputation during his lifetime. From the success of *Eurydice* (1731), *Mustapha* (1739), and *Alfred* (1740), to his marriage with the wealthy Miss Elstob and his appointment as under-secretary to the Prince of Wales (1742), his rise was steady. After the production of *Eurydice*, Hill took occasion, in the course of some gratuitous advice to Walpole (March 12, 1731, *Works*, I, 51), to recommend Mallet to his favor; but Walpole did not respond, and it was with the Opposition that Mallet found his profit. When the Prince commanded the performance of *Mustapha* and ignored the claims of *Caesar*, Hill bore the shock cheerfully,—pleased, in fact, that it fell at a time when the disordered state of his affairs made “the little benefit in view from the coming on of a play of some pleasure and use in the prospect” (Hill to Mallet, January 25, 1739, *Works*, I, 330). They remained on excellent terms until Hill's death; one or two later incidents of their friendship have a place in the account of Hill's relations with Richardson.

not known. The *Life of Savage*, published in 1727, speaking of his loss of a pension from the actress Mrs. Oldfield after the Bubble disasters, adds, "He would have been reduced to as great extremities as ever, if his merit had not recommended him to the ornament of English poesy, Aaron Hill, Esq.; miserable as he was in every other part of his life, his intimacy and friendship with this gentleman was a happiness he has been much envied for." And Johnson states that for some time before 1723, Savage had been distinguished by Hill with "very particular kindness."⁶² The kindness must have been ill repaid: "I have been so angry with Mr. Savage of late," wrote Hill to Victor in February, 1723, "that I believed he could never have pleased me again; but as he came to me in your letter, he was so pleasantly dressed, that I was forced to receive him smiling, in spite of spleen and resentment."⁶³ Savage's situation at the time—he was then writing *Sir Thomas Overbury*—might well have disarmed Hill's anger. He was often without lodging or meat, with no conveniences for study except the fields and the streets; "there he used to walk and form his speeches, and afterwards step into a shop, beg for a few moments the use of the pen and ink, and write down what he had composed, upon paper which he had picked up by accident."⁶⁴

Had Savage's distress failed to touch him, Hill was not the man to resist the delicate flattery of the verses Savage sent, with a request that Hill correct his tragedy:⁶⁵

"Thy touch brings the wished stone to pass,
So sought, so long foretold;
It turns polluted lead or brass,
At once to purest gold."

⁶² Johnson's *Lives*, ed. G. B. Hill, II, 339.

⁶³ February 21. Victor's *Hist. of the Theatres*, II, 171.

⁶⁴ Johnson's *Lives*, II, 338-339.

⁶⁵ Savage, *Works*, 1791. The stanza quoted is the last.

Though, when the corrections came back, Savage was not entirely delighted with the golden touch, and even rejected several passages, Hill did not resent the neglect of his alterations, and furnished the prologue and epilogue.⁶⁶ Savage thanked him profusely in the advertisement to the published tragedy:⁶⁷ "My gratitude prompts me to declare the obligations I have to my best and dearest friend, Mr. Aaron Hill, for his many judicious corrections in this tragedy. On that worthy gentleman (whose mind is enriched with every noble science, and in whose breast all the virtues of humanity are comprised), it will be my pride to offer my sentiments in a more distinguishing manner hereafter." Possibly to this period may be referred the admonitions mentioned in *The Friend*, later addressed to Hill:

"Oft when you saw my youth wild error know,
Reproof, soft-hinted, taught the blush to glow.
Young and unformed, you first my genius raised,
Just smiled, when faulty, and when moderate, praised."⁶⁸

If Hill taught Savage to blush, it was an accomplishment he soon forgot.

Without the publicity afforded by the *Plain Dealer*, it is unlikely that Savage's account of his birth and his misfortunes would have obtained the wide credence and aroused the sympathy it did. The steps in the gradual elaboration of this story are interesting. When he published his comedy, *Love in a Veil*, in 1718, he made his first public appearance as "Richard Savage, son of the late Earl Rivers." In Curril's *Poetical Register* (1719), he is described as Earl Rivers's son, and a few details are added,—details that are meagre compared with the artistic completeness of the account in the *Plain Dealer*. The 15th number

⁶⁶ Johnson's *Lives*, II, 340.

⁶⁷ Edition of 1724.

⁶⁸ Savage's *Miscellany*, and Savage's *Works*, 1791, I, 165.

printed a poem of Savage's,⁶⁹ with a few remarks on the merit of the author and the uncommon cruelty of his mother; and then, in the 28th number, appeared a letter from "Amintas." Was this letter really written by some unknown Amintas, or by Hill, or by Savage himself? It is impossible to say; for the device of an anonymous letter is so common that it proves nothing. But Savage's testimony in *The Friend* points to Hill as the author:

"Me shunned, me ruined, such a mother's rage!
You sung, till Pity wept o'er every page.
You called my lays and wrongs to early fame."

And in the preface to the *Miscellany* he states that the author of the *Plain Dealer* pointed out his unhappy story to the world with a touching humanity.

The story, whether written by Hill, or Savage, or Amintas, is indeed touchingly told. The narrator, after recounting several instances of the mother's cruelty, goes on as follows:

"I forbear to be too particular on any of these heads, because I know it would give him pain, for whose sake only I remember them. For while Nature acts so weakly on the humanity of the parent, she seems, on the son's side, to have doubled her usual influence. Even the most shocking personal repulses, and a series of contempt and injuries received at her hands, through the whole course of his life, have not been able to erase from his heart the impressions of his filial duty; nor, which is much more strange! of his affection. I have known him walk three or four times, in a dark evening, through the street this mother lives in, only for the melancholy pleasure of looking up at her windows, in hopes to catch a moment's sight of her, as she might cross the room by candle-light." If she but knew how tenderly he thought of her, she would surely relent. Then

⁶⁹ To Dyer, in praise of Clio's picture (Savage's Works, I, 159).

follow verses, written, says "Amintas," at a time "when I know not which was most to be wondered at: that he should be serene enough for poetry, under the extremity of ill-fortune! Or that his subject should be the praise of her, to whom he owed a life of misery!" The lines appear in Hill's *Works*, as "made for Mr. S-v-ge, and sent to my Lady M-ls-d, his mother."⁷⁰ If they were written by Hill, the cause for Amintas's wonder vanishes. They picture Alexis, friendless and alone, thrown in wild disorder on his cold bed, and sighing over his fate, neglected by the mother who had cast him on the world's bleak wild. He calls her, nevertheless, "the sweet negleter of his woes," whose soul melts at every misfortune but his. Both letter and poem conclude in somewhat the same strain: perhaps the mother needs merely to be touched into a sense of her mistake to atone for it. Rather oddly, the *Plain Dealer*, in the course of his editorial comments on this letter, advises silence about our miseries.

In no. 73, Savage writes under his own name in regard to the proposal of a *Miscellany*. He expresses himself as most grateful for the kind reflections made on his unfortunate case by the *Plain Dealer*, and encloses "convincing original letters" to prove that less had been said of his wrongs and sufferings "than the unhappy truth could have justified." These papers furnish one of the puzzles of the story,—a puzzle that W. Moy Thomas, in several articles published in 1858, solved very much to Savage's disadvantage.⁷¹ He noted the inconsistencies in the different accounts of the finding of the papers; the curious fact that they were never published, though, if authentic, they would have established the story beyond doubt; and the other curious fact that they disappeared after convincing Aaron

⁷⁰ IV, 51. Savage probably refers to them in the lines quoted above.

⁷¹ *Notes and Queries*, 2d S., VI, 361, 385, 425, 445.

Hill that Savage was indeed an injured nobleman.⁷² Savage's latest biographer, though convinced that he was no deliberate impostor, and cannot be held responsible for inconsistencies in accounts not certainly written by him, has no solution for the puzzle.⁷³ Possibly the papers were convincing enough to stand the scrutiny of those whose sympathies were already enlisted in his behalf, but not convincing enough to be tested by impartial or hostile examination. W. Moy Thomas called Hill foolish and good-natured for believing in Savage, and Professor Lounsbury speaks of his abounding generosity and corresponding lack of sense;⁷⁴ but it is certainly no reproach to be foolish and kind with Dr. Johnson and Pope.

The *Plain Dealer* articles had so good an effect that "many persons of quality, of all ranks and of both sexes," without waiting to be applied to, sent in their subscriptions;⁷⁵ and Savage, going a few days after to Button's Coffee House (where, to save his modesty, he had asked that subscribers' names be sent), found there seventy guineas, "which had been sent him in consequence of the compassion excited by Mr. Hill's pathetic representation."⁷⁶

Representations on Savage's behalf were continually required of his friends. At the time of his conviction for murder (December, 1727), Hill was undoubtedly among those who solicited his pardon, whether or not his plea actually drew tears from the Queen;⁷⁷ and he was probably

⁷² *Plain Dealer*, no. 73.

⁷³ S. V. Makower: *Richard Savage, a Mystery in Biography*, 1909.

⁷⁴ T. R. Lounsbury, *The Text of Shakespeare*, 372.

⁷⁵ Preface to the *Miscellany*; nos. 28 and 73 of the *Plain Dealer* were reprinted there.

⁷⁶ Johnson's *Lives*, II, 342-343.

⁷⁷ As "I. K." states in the life prefixed to Hill's *Dramatic Works*. "I. K." cannot be trusted not to exaggerate the achievements of his subject; the two poems (*The Bastard* and *The Volunteer Laureate*)

the author of a letter, printed in the *Life of Savage* published during the trial, "supposed to be wrote by one of the gentlemen before-mentioned for having publicly expressed his compassion for Mr. Savage's sufferings." The only "gentlemen before-mentioned" are Steele, Wilks, and Hill, and the only one of the three who expressed his compassion in a conspicuously public manner was Hill. The letter is addressed to "a noble Lord, in behalf of Mr. Savage and Mr. Gregory"; as to the former's character, the writer says: "I have known and conversed with [him] several years, and can therefore more fully speak him: I have discovered in him a mind incapable of evil; I have beheld him sigh for the distressed, when more distressed himself; I have seen him give that relief to others, which not long before he has in some degree wanted. He is so far from a litigious man, that he was always more ready to stifle the remembrance of an injury than to resent it."

Whether Hill wrote this or not, it accurately represents his attitude towards Savage—an attitude that remained unchanged until Savage's death, though their relations were much less intimate after 1730.⁷⁸ When Lord Tyrconnel took Savage under his protection, Hill congratulated him on this deed of humanity to an unfortunate kinsman;⁷⁹ and later, having heard vague reports of a quarrel, he tried to persuade Savage to make it up.⁸⁰ The few letters that he declares to be the work of Hill are not among his collected poems, and show no special characteristics of his style; they are probably rightly ascribed to Savage.

⁷⁸ Savage's *Wanderer* (1729) mentions Hill,—"to virtue and the muse forever dear." Hill refers to "poor unhappy Savage" in a letter to Richardson, April 4, 1745. Richardson advised him not to read Johnson's *Life*, because of its references to his peculiar style.

⁷⁹ Hill to Tyrconnel, March 10, 1731. *Works*, I, 49.

⁸⁰ Hill to Savage, June 23, 1736 (*Works*, I, 337): "I am sure your just sense of what he once was will prevail over any less agreeable remembrance of what he may have since seemed or been."

passed between them are pleasant but not very significant. Hill may have done Savage some further service about 1736, in connection with a law-suit which he offered to use his influence in settling; and in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for November, 1736, *The Friend*, with its tribute to Hill, was reprinted.⁸¹ In the same year Hill wrote to Thomson: "Some of his friends make complaints of certain little effects of a spleen in his temper, which he is no more able to help and should, therefore, no more be accountable for, than the misfortunes to which . . . his constitution may have owed it originally"; a pension from the king should place him above those mortifications in life which "must have soured his disposition, and given the unreflecting part of his acquaintance occasion to complain, now and then, of his behaviour."⁸²

Such charity would have done Hill credit even if Savage had been uniformly grateful. But that was not his way. His esteem was no very certain possession, as Johnson said; "he would lampoon at one time those whom he had praised at another."⁸³ And Hill did not escape. There is a hint in one of Thomson's letters of "barbarous provocation": "Nothing is to me a stronger instance of the unimprovable nature of that unhappy creature [Savage] of whom you speak so compassionately, notwithstanding of the barbarous provocation he has given you, than his remaining bleak and withered under the influences of your conversation—a certain sign of a field that the Lord has cursed."⁸⁴ Yet Hill evidently forgave this provocation, whatever it was, as he had the injury of three or four years before.

⁸¹ Thomson writes to Hill, May 11, 1736, *Col.* of 1751; "Poor Mr. Savage would be happy to pass an evening with you; his heart burns towards you with the eternal fire of gratitude; but how to find him requires more intelligence than is allotted to mortals."

⁸² May 20, 1736, *Works*, I, 237.

⁸³ Johnson's *Lives*, II, 359.

⁸⁴ Thomson to Hill, April 27, 1726. *Col.* of 1751.

The friendship of Hill with Savage, and of both with Mallet, Clio, Dyer, and Thomson, was most intimate while the *Miscellany* was in process of publication; and the poems in that collection give us a glimpse of the little mutual admiration society over which Hill presided. Of the ninety-two poems, more than one-third—and among these the longest selections—are Hill's; they include several already published, several apparently new.⁸⁵ *The Picture of Love* is printed entire; there is a long passage from the seventh book of *Gideon*, some Scriptural paraphrases, a few translations from the *Lusiads*, *The Happy Man*,⁸⁶ letters on riches and poverty by Mr. Marshall Smith and Hill, various epitaphs, serious and jocose, and complimentary lines to Mrs. Howard and several unidentified but charming ladies. Of the other contributors, Savage himself comes next with fourteen poems; then Clio with nine; William Popple, John Dyer, and "Miranda, consort of Aaron Hill," have six apiece; Mallet, Mrs. Haywood, Concanen, and Thomas Cooke, one or more. The depression inspired by most of this verse is lightened a little by two pieces of real merit,—Dyer's *Country Walk* and *Grongar Hill* (in its Pindaric form). Most noticeably frequent are the compliments interchanged among the authors themselves. All the flattery usually at the service of noble patrons is here poured out on one another. Two duties were incumbent on members of the circle: they must vow devotion to Clio, and they must praise Hillarius and all his works.

For this name Hill was indebted to Mrs. Eliza Haywood, for whose *Fair Captive* he wrote the epilogue in 1721.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ All but a few were republished in his *Works*.

⁸⁶ This has a couplet that has invited scornful quotation:

"Lengths of wild garden his near views adorn,
And far-seen fields wave with domestic corn."

(Johnson's *Lives*, II, 342, n. 4).

⁸⁷ The epilogue is upon the hardships of a Turkish wife, the play

His christening perhaps took place soon after, for in an *Irregular Ode*, published in 1724, Mrs. Haywood defends the name against the objections of Mr. Walter Bowman, professor of Mathematics: it is “far beneath the mighty wearer’s worth,” but to describe his charms in a name is a perplexing problem:

“A name it must be which implies
 At once the wonders of his soul and eyes;
 Cherubial sweetness! godlike majesty!
 Numberless myriads of divinities
 Which sparkling in his looks, his words, his works we see!”

“Soft as his voice! but lofty as his mien.
 Each thrilling syllable pleased awe impart,
 Which through the ear may strike the heart.”

Should this task prove too much for mortal wit, the poetess suggests a pilgrimage to the heavenly throne, where Moses, Gideon, and David, shining more glorious by reason of his lays, will hail your approach; angels will second your request (“angels are his admirers too!”), and the Almighty, with a pleased regard, will reward your devotion with the gift of an adequate name. Until that happy moment, Eliza’s choice shall live:

“Through every orb Hillarius shall be heard,
 And altars to his shining virtues reared.”⁸⁸

The poems of Hillarius had a very disturbing effect on Mrs. Haywood; even through the disguise of anonymity, assumed by the muse of Hill on one occasion, her soul acknowledged the magnetic call, and cried in transport—“‘tis Hillarius!” To a thoughtless inquiry how she liked a poem of his, she replied that every sense was lost in having a Turkish setting, and is precisely as decent and witty as one would expect on such a subject in an epilogue of that period.

⁸⁸ *Poems on Several Occasions* (1724) in vol. II. of Mrs. Haywood’s *Secret Histories, Novels, and Poems*, 1725.

amazement, “transport-shook Reason quit its tottering seat,” and she lay “o'erwhelmed in seas of ecstasy.” Once, Eliza was awed by a vision of the throne of wit, with all the sons of poetry about it; but a voice directed her to return to the world below if she wished to find all the beauties of past poets united in one person, with a new charm added. This convinced her that she never could be calm again, till she grew less “sensible,” or Hill less glorious.⁸⁹ Hill, too, had a flattering vision of Eliza, and addressed to her a few other short poems; one line expresses the effect she had on him: “Her looks alarm! but when she writes, she kills.”⁹⁰ On the whole, however, Mrs. Haywood must be acknowledged the greater proficient in the gentle art of flattery—Hillarius never ascended the highest heaven of invention, where her muse moved freely among the patriarchs and the angels, under the pleased regard of the Almighty.

Nor did any other of Hill’s admirers rise quite to her heights, though several of them did rather well. In *Henry V*, for instance, Clio sees “Hillarian fire refining Shakespeare’s gold”; and Concanen, varying the metaphor, declares that Hill found Shakespeare’s play copper and left it gold.⁹¹ In the case of *Gideon*, Dyer and Savage seem helpless to do much more than quote long extracts with despairing admiration; they have no hope of rivalling some

⁸⁹ Mrs. Haywood edited the *Tea Table*. In no. 26, May 18, 1724, in a discussion of the present state of poetry, is a reference to Aaron Hill, who excels in epic and dramatic poetry both; and to the unfortunate son of the late Earl Rivers, renowned in tragedy and occasional verse.

⁹⁰ To *Eliza* (*Miscellany*, 90); *Eliza’s Designed Voyage to Spain* (*Works*, III, 363). *The Vision* (*Miscellany*, 71) becomes in *Works*, III, 55, *The Reconciliation*, and Eliza becomes Cleora.

⁹¹ All these poems are in the *Miscellany*.

of its "surprising pictures."⁹² Savage does enter the lists with Mrs. Haywood in a passage describing how Hillarius's song flies with Pindaric fire:

"Wafted in charmful music through the air (Gideon)
Unstopp'd by clouds, it reaches to the skies,
And joins with angels' hallelujahs there,
Flows mixed and sweetly strikes the Almighty's ear."

Savage and Mrs. Haywood were friends, and no doubt she had other friends in the group. But their Aspasia was "Clio," or, more prosaically, Martha Fowke, who married a Mr. Sansome, and died in 1736, at about the age of forty-six. The *Poetical Register* (1719) noticed her as an accomplished young lady, who usually published under the name of Clio. Steele "often expressed in several companies the singular value and esteem" he had for her "extraordinary wit."⁹³ To Clio herself it was a hated

⁹² Of the surprising pictures in *Gideon*, take for example this from Book III (it is not quoted by Dyer)—a description of the lion:

"High o'er his back his tail turned upward waved;
Red were his eyes and sparkled on the plain."

But the picture of a ram in Dyer's *Fleece* is as surprising as anything in *Gideon*:

“Long swings his slender tail; his front is fenced
With horns Ammonian, circulating twice
Around each open ear, like those fair scrolls
That grace the columns of the Ionic dome.”

And Thomson's pillar (in *Liberty*) can stand up with the lion and the ram:

“First unadorned
And nobly plain, the manly Doric rose;
The Ionie then, with decent matron grace,
Her airy pillar heaved.”

⁹³ Dedication of her *Epistles of Clio and Strephon*, 1720. A 2d and 3d edition of these *Epistles*—conventional couplets expressing the conventional fears and hopes of lovers—were published in 1729 and 1732.

thought that she was born a woman, "for household cares and empty trifles meant," and she aspired to stretch her mind beyond her sex,—an ill-advised attempt in that age and likely to cause scandal.⁹⁴ Enough notoriety finally attached to the name of Clio to induce Mallet to rechristen her "Mira."⁹⁵ Among her friends she counted Dyer, Mallet, Savage, Thomson, Bond, Victor, Mitchell, and Hill. Dyer painted her portrait, on which Hill and Savage wrote verses, compact about equally of flattery of the artist's skill and the lady's charms. Dyer's *Country Walk* is filled with longing for Clio; and as a shepherd (in the *Inquiry*) he asks his sheep if they have met with his love on mountain or in valley. Clio encourages him to write on, and praises his portrait of her as much as modesty will permit. She and Savage condole with each other on their misfortunes—her's including a murdered father and innumerable lost friends, torn from her by death or absence. And she extends an invitation to Savage to come down from the stars and visit her in the humble vale where she communes with Nature. Mallet suffers torments in her absence, and describes her in terms that quite ravished Thomson, recently admitted into her circle.

But her most accomplished and Platonic lover was Hill. Bond was *Strephon*. (See *London Evening Post*, Dec. 5, 1728.) Mrs. Haywood (*Memoirs of a Certain Island adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia*, 1725) tells of the intrigue of the Countess of Macclesfield and Earl Rivers, and of Savage's birth, in the *History of Masonia, Count Marville and Count Riverius* (p. 157 f.). Mrs. Haywood praises Savage generously, but expresses unmitigated contempt for a certain "vile woman," a pretender to the art of poetry, who has betrayed Savage by her wiles. Mr. George Whicher, of the University of Illinois, who is engaged on a study of Mrs. Haywood, thinks this siren may be "Clio." I am indebted to Mr. Whicher for this reference.

⁹⁴ See a poem to Dyer, in the *Miscellany*.

⁹⁵ According to an attack on Savage in the *British Journal*, September 24, 1726, quoted in *Philobiblon Soc. Miscellanies*, IV, 12.

Scenes such as "we read in our youthful days, in Sir Philip Sidney's *Pastoral Romance*," came to Victor's mind, when he recalled twenty years later the hours he had spent with Hill, "that elegant lover," and his "charming Clio."⁹⁶ No attempt to reconstruct this Arcadia can hope to be successful; Hill's letters and poems to Clio merely afford a few glimpses. One letter attributes the laziness she complains of feeling to a temporary absence of her soul, which is abroad, inspiring his and "inflaming it with a thousand ideas" of her loveliness.⁹⁷ Another encloses verses, written after seeing her at a performance of *Julius Caesar*; he found himself sorely perplexed to choose between the attractions of the bloody stage and of this vision of Clio:

"Round her pleased mouth impatient Cupids throng,
To snatch th'inspiring music from her tongue;
Thick, through her sparkling eyes, break unconfined,
The winged ideas of her crowded mind;
A mind! that burning with inferior glow,
Does her whole form with lustre overflow."⁹⁸

His perplexity is not surprising. Other letters indicate an interchange of verses and of invitations to call. The *Miscellany* contained the poem, *To Mr. Dyer, on his attempting Clio's Picture*. If the task is possible to anyone, it is to Dyer; but it is rather difficult for a painter

"Strong to your burning eircle to confine
That awe-mixed sweetness and that air divine!
That sparkling soul which lightens from within!
And breaks in unspoke meanings through her skin."

Of other poems, undoubtedly written about this time, one is on her birthday;⁹⁹ another tells how, before he met her,

⁹⁶ Victor's *Letters*, II, 66 (letter to Dyer).

⁹⁷ Hill's *Works*, II, 180. Dated 1721 in the 1754 ed.

⁹⁸ *Dramatic Works*, II, 389.

⁹⁹ *Works*, III, 41.

his imagination, now confined to one theme, flew restlessly about the universe, knowing every moment some fresh labor; if he could only live till the death of Clio's fame, he could hope to display all the unborn deeds within him;

"But, as it is, our fleeting sands so fast
Ebb to their end and lead us to decay,
That ere we learn to see, our daylight's past,
And like a melting mist, life shrinks away."¹⁰⁰

Other love songs perhaps refer to Clio, without specifically mentioning her.¹⁰¹

After her death, Hill wrote to Savage: "Poor C---o! It is long since I met with an affliction more sensible than the information you sent me concerning her! If half what her enemies have said of her is true, she was a proof that vanity overcomes nature in women, which it could never yet do in men: for desire of glory wants power to expel the pusillanimity natural to some ambitious princes and generals; while in that amiable pursuer of conquests it prevailed, not only against the finest reflection, but impelled an assumed lightness over every constitutional modesty."¹⁰² The tone of the comment suggests that Hill had seen little of her for some years. Probably his restless imagination could not long be confined to the one theme of a Platonic

¹⁰⁰ *Works*, III, 6.

¹⁰¹ Miranda, "the consort of A. Hill," whose poems, according to Savage, exhibit the combined charms of Clio's and Lady M. W. Montagu's, joined her husband in praising Clio. Miranda writes on sleep, and Clio responds; Miranda replies to that—surely in inspiring a poem by Clio, "never Muse so profitably slept" as hers. But both here and in a poem to "Aurelia," whom she advises to be content with meeting Hillarius only in his poems, Miranda proclaims unequivocally her right to Hillarius: "If on earth there can perfection be, Heaven, which bestowed Hillarius, gave it me." She accepted Clio, but refused to admit any of the Aurelias and Evandras who figure in the *Miscellany*.

¹⁰² June 23, 1736. *Works*, I, 338.

friendship, though it was quite in accord with his elaborateness to work up such a theme for a time with great zest—after whatever flourish you will.

The flourishes are astonishing,—those of the others in praise of Hill, as well as Hill's in praise of Clio and all the rest. Still, flattery of Hill was at least based on sincere gratitude for what he had done, and on appreciation of his generous nature. Its absurd exaggeration is to be explained partly by the fact that Hill, with his genius for extravagant expression, set the pace in praise of his friends; and they, younger and less known, could not risk the discourtesy of falling behind. This reasonable suggestion was made in apology for the tone of exaggeration in Thomson's letters to Hill.¹⁰³ But it must be remembered, too, that Thomson first saw Hill through the eyes of Savage and Mallet, when both were very grateful for Hill's encouragement, and the sight could not have been other than impressive.¹⁰⁴

It is natural that Mallet should have introduced his fellow-countryman to Hill; natural, too, that a young poet, coming to London in search of fame, should seek to know the critic who had publicly proclaimed him, on the strength of an early poem, "a prodigious young man." This notice of Thomson, inspired by his "masterly" *Fragment of a Poem on the Works and Wonders of Almighty Power*, had appeared in the same number of the *Plain Dealer* that published Mallet's modest confession of the authorship of the ballad.¹⁰⁵ The "prodigious young man" arrived in London

¹⁰³ G. C. Macaulay: *Thomson*, 19.

¹⁰⁴ Thomson knew Savage by July, 1725, as he mentions him in writing to Mallet.

¹⁰⁵ No. 46, August 28, 1724. The poem was reprinted, as given by Thomson to Hill, by Allan Cunningham (see Aldine ed. of Thomson's works, II, 161). M. Morel does not mention the *Plain Dealer* notice in his biography of Thomson.

some six months later (February, 1725), and through Mallet and Duncan Forbes was probably introduced to various literary people even before his *Winter* was published in March, 1726. The interest centres, of course, about the fortunes of the poem. Victor states that both he and his agreeable friend, Mr. Hill, saw and admired it in MS., and adds, "I remember Mr. Malloch . . . and I walked one November day to all the booksellers in the Strand and Fleet Street to sell the copy of this poem, and at last could only fix with Mr. Millar, who then lived in a little shop in Fleet Street."¹⁰⁶ This account, inaccurate as it has been proved in several details (Victor was writing after the lapse of some years),¹⁰⁷ is no doubt substantially true. Mallet would be likely to show the poem to Hill as well as to Victor. Various people have been mentioned as noticing the poem while it lay neglected at the bookseller's;¹⁰⁸ but the one person who certainly took up the cause of Thomson with ardor, and the only one for whose championship we have Thomson's testimony, was Hill.

Hill wrote enthusiastically to Mallet about the poem; Thomson saw the letter; and thereupon, according to Dr. Johnson, "courted Hill with every expression of servile adulation."¹⁰⁹ The phrase is unkind, though such flights as these might suggest it:¹¹⁰ "Though I cannot boast the honor and happiness of your acquaintance, and ought with the utmost deference and veneration to approach so supreme a genius, yet my full heart is not to be repressed by formalities. . . . I will not affect a moderate joy at your

¹⁰⁶ *Original Letters*, III, 27.

¹⁰⁷ Such as the name of the bookseller—Millan, not Millar.

¹⁰⁸ Shiels names Whately; Johnson, Whatly; Warton, Spence; Good-hugh, Andrew Mitchell; Dalloway, Rundle.

¹⁰⁹ *Lives*, III, 284.

¹¹⁰ Thomson to Hill, April 5, 1726. All the earlier letters of Thomson to Hill were published in the *Collection* of 1751.

approbation, your praise; it pleases, it delights, it ravishes me! . . . That great mind, and transcendent humanity, that appear in the testimony you have been pleased to give my first attempt, would have utterly confounded me, if I had not been prepared for such an entertainment by your well-known character; which the voice of fame and your own masterly writings loudly proclaim. . . . If I wrote all that admiration of your perfections and my gratitude dictate, I should never have done; but, lest I tire you, I'll for the present rather put a violence on myself.”¹¹¹

Hill's reply evidently overflowed with an expansive benevolence that led Thomson in his next letter to discourse on “social love” as contrasted with self-love, Hill being a shining example of the former: “Your writings, while they glow with innumerable instances of strong thinking and sublime imagination, are peculiarly marked with this beautiful benevolence of mind. . . . I am ravished with the hope you give me of your nearer acquaintance.”¹¹² This hope was gratified on April 26, and after reflecting over night on the delights of the visit, Thomson wrote on the “down-right inspiration” of Hill's society: “There is, in your conversation, such a beauty, truth, force, and elegance of thought and expression; such animated fine sense, and chastised fancy; so much dignity and condescension, sub-

¹¹¹ Thomson's praise of Mallet is quite as excessive as Hill's of Thomson or Thomson's of Hill. In a letter to Mallet of August 11, 1726, he declares two lines of the *Excursion* equal to any Shakespeare ever wrote on the subject; and in September he was convinced that Mallet must converse with the sages and heroes of antiquity: “You think like them too, your bosom swells with the same divine ambition, and would if in the same circumstances display the same heroic virtues, that lie all glowing at your heart.” Perhaps it was because Mallet was never placed in those favoring circumstances that he displayed such unheroic meanness in the treatment of the memory of his friend Pope.

¹¹² Letter of April 18.

limity, and sweetness; in a word, such a variety of entertainment and instruction, as is beyond all admiration.” Clearly Hill the conversationalist almost equalled in varied accomplishment Hill the essayist. “To descend from your company,” he goes on, “and mingle with the herd of mankind, is like Nebuchadnezzar’s descending from a throne to graze with the beasts of the field.” Rather than join Nebuchadnezzar in the fields, Thomson feasts on the memory of the rich entertainment; “that little seraph, the young *Urania*,” especially charmed him,—“her elegant turn of mind: her innocence and goodness in the choice of her subjects; her fancy, judgment, and ambition, above her years . . . are most agreeably surprising.” The little seraph must have already begun to compose—a habit that clung to her all her life.

The dedication of *Winter* to Sir Spencer Compton, Speaker of the House of Commons, had brought no response to prove his possession of the “fine discernment” attributed to him, along with all other noble qualities, by Mallet, the author of the eulogy. This neglect excited Hill to attack patrons in a poem, which he sent to Thomson and also to several newspapers.¹¹³ Shun patrons, he advises Thomson, and stand alone; very few peers are judges of poetic merit.

“On verse like yours no smiles from power expeet,
Born with a worth that doomed you to neglect.”

He who

“stoops safe beneath a patron’s shade,
Shines like the moon, but by a borrowed aid.
Truth should, unbiassed, free and open steer.”

Thomson expressed delight at the praise and wonder at the fineness of the satire,—“marked with exalted sentiment and generous contempt.”¹¹⁴ The hitherto undiscerning Speaker

¹¹³ Johnson’s *Lives*, III, 285.

¹¹⁴ May 24, 1726.

was also moved, partly by the publicity, partly by the growing popularity of *Winter*, the first edition of which was now exhausted; and he kindly expressed a willingness to see the poet. "He received me," wrote Thomson to Hill, "in what they commonly call a civil manner, asked me some commonplace questions, and made me a present of twenty guineas."¹¹⁵

In the same letter that recorded the Speaker's generosity, Thomson enclosed, for Hill's correction, some verses by Mallet, to be published in the second edition of *Winter*; in his opinion, "their only glorious fault, if they have any, is an excess of that beautiful benevolence of mind, which, among a thousand things, make you and him so greatly amiable." It was pertinent to enlarge on the benevolence and amiability of his friends—he needed their help to extricate himself from an awkward situation. He had planned to print in the new edition Hill's poem as well as Mallet's, with their fine satire on negligent patrons and their fervent praise of himself. But the patron had just signified his tardy pleasure. How persuade the two friends to tone down the satire, of which they were especially proud? Would their benevolence overcome their literary vanity? How avoid offense, either to the friends who had championed him when the patron neglected him, or to the patron who had repented and paid?

He first tried tactful hints with Hill: "One of your infinite delicacy will be the best judge, whether it will be proper to print these two inimitable copies of verses I have from you and Mr. Mallet, without such little alterations as shall clear Sir Spencer of the best satire I ever read. . . . Only this let me add, should you find that the case required some small alterations, and yet not indulge me with them,

¹¹⁵ June 7, 1726. The interview with the Speaker took place on June 4.

I shall reckon what my patron gave me a fatal present. 'Tis a thought too shocking to be borne—to lose the applause of the great genius of the age, my charter of fame! for—I will not name it. But you are too good to plague me so severely. I expect this favor from Mr. Mallet next post.'¹¹⁶ Mallet's favor did not come by the next post. Mallet and Hill each held back to see what the other would do; and poor Thomson, in letters of mingled entreaty and compliment, tried to play them off one against the other. Finally Mallet, declaring it out of his power to alter his verses, proposed suppressing the whole poem. A most unpleasant notion! Thomson had expected their names to live together; were twenty guineas—"twenty curses on them!"—to be the price of his fame? Could he not satirize something besides patrons,—the avarice, littleness, stupidity of men of fortune, or the barbarous contempt of poetry, for instance? "You might make a glorious apostrophe to the drooping genius of Britain—have Shakespeare and Milton in your eye, and invite to the pursuit of genuine poetry." Let him have anything in his eye but the Speaker. And yet, in a letter to Hill a few days later, Thomson expresses himself as still confident of receiving verses from Mallet by the next post; surely Mr. Hill's wondrous generosity is not going to fail in this crisis?¹¹⁷

The upshot of the little comedy was that the poems were printed, with their scorn practically unmodified. Hill, it is true, made a few trivial alterations;¹¹⁸ Mallet, probably none, for his allusions to patrons are very pointed. Thomson had preferred a possible charge of ingratitude to the

¹¹⁶ June 7.

¹¹⁷ See letters of Thomson to Hill of June 7, 11, and 17; and to Mallet, June 13 (Philobiblon Society Miscellanies, IV, 9 f.).

¹¹⁸ The lines quoted by Thomson in the letter are slightly different from those in the 2d ed. of *Winter*. The poem was reprinted in the *Works*, III, 77.

omission of the “chalereux éloges” of his friends.¹¹⁹ The second edition contained, besides the poems of Hill, Mallet, and “Mira,” a grateful acknowledgment of Hill’s assistance and a warm tribute to his character, which may be regarded as closing this chapter of their relations.¹²⁰ The tone of the later letters changes: Thomson, with his reputation established, is still prodigal of compliments, but less obsequious; he is addressing a friend, not a deity.

Hill’s absences in Scotland and Thomson’s trip abroad (1730–31) interrupted the correspondence until November, 1733, when Hill sent *Zara* to Thomson, with a request to make it known to Bubb Dodington and other influential friends. Thomson’s reply is very cordial both to *Zara* and its author, but has the assured tone of a man who possesses some influence with the Dodingtons of the day. Not all his influence, however, with Hill’s added, could overcome the public indifference to *Liberty*, which began to appear in December, 1734. In acknowledging the present of Part I, even Hill hints at a little dissatisfaction with the style: “How happens it that you should change a grace almost peculiar to yourself, in favor of transposition and obscurity, by endeavoring after beauties which, I am sure, are unnecessary to your poem, and (I fear) unnatural to our idiom?” Still, the poem is “all soul.”¹²¹ In the 28th number of the *Prompter*,¹²² Hill quotes a passage from Part II, with hearty praise of its harmony and sentiment. But the much-needed puff apparently had little effect on a

¹¹⁹ L. Morel: *Thomson*, 61.

¹²⁰ “His favors are the very smiles of humanity, graceful and easy, flowing from and to the heart. This agreeable train of thought awakens naturally in my mind all the other parts of his great and amiable character, which I know not well how to quit, and yet dare not here pursue.”

¹²¹ January 17, 1735. *Works*, I, 210.

¹²² February 14, 1735.

sale that proceeded more and more slowly as each new part appeared,—so slowly, in fact, that in May of the following year Thomson thought of annulling the bargain with his bookseller, who would else be a considerable loser, and getting out a new edition later.¹²³

Naturally, the neglect of his work intensified his gloomy views as to the general corruption of the age. He expects to see “all poetry reduced to magazine miscellanies, all plays to mummery entertainments, and, in short, all learning absorbed into the sink of purely scurrilous newspapers.”¹²⁴ A wrong use of the gifts of commerce turns wealth to private jobs, not public works; to profitable, not fine arts; to gain, not glory.¹²⁵ Stage affairs are quite hopeless—he never expects to see at the head of the theatres any gentleman of equal judgment, genius, taste, and generosity to the author of the *Prompters*.¹²⁶ To Hill this was not at the time a purely visionary prospect: both *Zara* and the *Prompter* had achieved more success than *Liberty*, and he had in September a scheme for getting the Prince interested in a new theatre. So he cannot quite agree with Thomson that the root of the stage evil is too deep to be plucked up. In regard to affairs in general, however, he is entirely in accord with him: commerce and wealth have corrupted the English; one cannot find a people long “retaining public virtue and extended commerce.” *Liberty* is to Hill “the dying effort of despairing and indignant virtue.”¹²⁷ Thomson has some hope in a copyright to protect arts and learning; Hill is afraid that would do no good

¹²³ Thomson to Hill, May 11, 1736. *Col.* of 1751.

¹²⁴ Thomson to Hill, August 23, 1735.

¹²⁵ May 11, 1736.

¹²⁶ August 23, 1735.

¹²⁷ Hill to Thomson, February 17, 1736. *Works*, I, 221.

unless the public is first educated.¹²⁸ And so they end, gloomily shaking their heads.

Hill's last letter to Thomson again hints at some degree of obscurity in *Liberty*, arising from the difficulty of "reducing infinity into distinction"; and he even criticizes certain lines. But Thomson had asked for criticism, and it is not likely that he took offense. Though they did not again correspond, they exchanged occasional kind messages through their friends; in July, 1744, Hill begs Richardson to return thanks to the author of the *Seasons* for remembering an old friend, "who, though he had still been forgotten, would . . . have yearly traced him around with new delight, from spring quite down to winter."¹²⁹

That the record of so many friendships should include no quarrels is a remarkable testimony to Hill's amiability. Possibly amenities so undiversified form monotonous reading; but the reproach of that kind of monotony was taken from Hill's life by Pope.

¹²⁸ Hill to Thomson, May 20, 1736, and Thomson to Hill, May 11, 1736.

¹²⁹ Richardson's *Correspondence*, ed. Mrs. Barbauld, I, 103.

CHAPTER VI

HILL'S RELATIONS WITH POPE

Bernard Lintot the publisher was responsible for the misunderstanding that inaugurated the checkered friendship of Pope and Hill. In 1718, Hill wrote *The Northern Star*, to celebrate the achievements of Peter the Great. To select a foreign prince for panegyric, rather than a possibly grateful dignitary near at hand, was so quixotic, that the poet feels called upon to explain at length that his duty is to search out and exalt virtue wherever he finds it—even if it be outside his own nation :

“ Perish that narrow pride, from custom grown,
That makes men blind to merits not their own.
Briton and Russian differ but in name.”¹

He then pictures in glowing terms the Czar’s devotion to both the “martial laurel and the peaceful bays”: he has civilized his own people, made the Dane, the Swede, and the Turk tremble, and the lords of China shrink behind their famous wall; and his piercing eye may even discover the secrets of the Northeast passage. At this farthest North, the poet stops the flight of his unbridled muse, and, in lines that dimly suggest the last chorus in Shelley’s *Hellas*, prophesies the final overthrow of Turkey by the Czar:

“ Shall then at last, beneath propitious skies,
The Cross triumphant o’er the Crescent rise?
Shall we behold earth’s long-sustained disgrace
Revenged in arms on Osman’s haughty race?
Shall Christian Greece shake off a captive’s shame,

¹ 1st ed., ll. 85–87.

And look unblushing at her pagan fame?
'Twill be.—Prophetic Delphos claims her own;
Hails her new Caesars on the Russian throne.
Athens shall teach once more! once more aspire!
And Spartan breasts reglow with martial fire!
Still, still, Byzantium's brightening domes shall shine,
And rear the ruined name of Constantine."²

Much as the poet would like to continue gazing at the star of the North, his eyes begin to ache, and he invites the muse to descend. The poem closes with a modest comparison of the Czar's sudden burst into glory to the appearance, at the Almighty fiat, of order out of chaos.

Such is the offering consecrated to the Czar,—one that would have been less unworthy, wrote Hill later, “had my genius allowed me fire but in proportion to my inflamed intention.”³ However unworthy of the Czar, the poem was probably not, in its author's opinion, unworthy of Aaron Hill. But before publishing it, he decided to submit it to the judgment of Pope, possibly hoping in this way to make his acquaintance. Lintot, whom he deputed to take it to Pope, brought back a report that filled Hill with amazement: “Mr. Lintot lisped out that Mr. Pope said there were several good things in *The Northern Star*, but it would be taken for an insult on the government, for, though the Czar is King George's ally, yet we are likely to quarrel with Sweden; and Muscovy, whispered Bernard, lies, he says, in the north.”⁴ Mr. Courthope terms this a nonsensical speech⁵—though it may be worth noting that George I and Peter were really far from being on friendly

² *Works*, 1753, III, 195–6.

³ Preface to 3d ed.

⁴ Preface to 1st ed.

⁵ Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, X, 2, note. See Lecky's *Eighteenth Century*, ch. II, on the situation between England and Russia. About 1715–16, Charles of Sweden and Peter formed an alliance, and there was danger that they might take up the cause of the Pretender.

terms. But however nonsensical, it scarcely justified the passion into which Hill fell, and which informs the "Preface to Mr. Pope" that appeared with the first edition of *The Northern Star*.

After quoting "honest Bernard's" statement, Hill goes on to attack Pope chiefly by the scornful application to him of lines in his own *Essay on Criticism*. "'Tis possible that under this disguise of opinion, your excess of good-breeding may have concealed your dislike of the performance"; yet why not avow the dislike? "Be niggard of advice on no pretence." The lines really applicable to the case may be:

"All seems infected that th'infected spy,
As all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye."

And Hill declares, "My esteem for your genius as a poet is so very considerable that it is hardly exceeded by my contempt of your vanity." Then leaving Pope for the moment, he passes to characteristic reflections—arising, of course, out of the supposed criticism of his subject—upon a narrow and restricted view of human affairs. Suppose the Czar were our enemy; "are his merits less shining? Does his glory depend on his friendship for Britain? Contemptible meanness of thought! . . . Next to deserving well ourselves, it is the noblest perfection of Nature to admire and applaud those who do so." This narrowness of mind he attributes in large measure to the flatteries of poets, "who generally writing for a precarious subsistence can no way so easily succeed as by falling in with the weakness and bias of men's natures. . . . A mere poet, that is to say, a wretch who has nothing but the jingle in his brains to ring chimes to his vanity, and whose whole trade is rhyme-jobbing,—such a creature is certainly the most worthless incumbrance of his country." General as this is, it was undoubtedly levelled at Pope, to whom the preface returns for a final petulant fling: "If, after all, it was not the

subject, but the poem, that found no favor in his eyes, I will take upon me to assure him, it sues not for the blessing; let him take it as ill as he pleases, I dare at least undertake, it shall easily defend itself against any attack of his making; which pray, Sir, inform him, since you are his greatest admirer."

Of this outburst Pope took no notice, and Hill must have grown somewhat ashamed of it; for in 1720 he sent Pope another poem—*The Creation*—accompanied by an apology.⁶ Pope, in his acknowledgment,⁷ declares himself pleased at the opportunity the gift offers of assuring Hill that he neither did, nor intended doing, him the least injury; he had been in so great a hurry at the time Lintot showed him the poem that he postponed a careful reading for a day or two; but the parts he did glance over he liked, and told Lintot so. "I think it incumbent on any well-meaning man to acquit himself of an illgrounded suspicion in another, who perhaps means equally well, and is only too credulous. I am sincerely so far from resenting this mistake that I am more displeased at your thinking it necessary to treat me so much in a style of compliment as you do in your letter." With commendable caution, he refrains from comment on the new poem, except to say, "I am sure the person who is capable of writing it can need no man to judge it,"—a remark susceptible of various interpretations.

So far, Pope clearly had the advantage. On no provocation but a reported remark, too absurd on its face to be authentic, he had been attacked publicly and intemperately, and had kept silent, until his enemy calmed down and made overtures, to which he responded pleasantly. It was wise treatment for a man of Hill's temperament,—placated as easily as he was aroused, and quick to appre-

⁶ Quoted in part in Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, X, 3.

⁷ Pope to Hill, March 2 (1720). Misdated 1731, in the *Col.* of 1751.

ciate even the appearance of sincerity. He now replied fervently:⁸ he is under the greatest confusion at realizing the crime he has been guilty of; he might have known from Pope's writings the extent of his soul; to call his guilt credulity is too generous—"it was a passionate and most unjustifiable levity"; it was indeed little less than a miracle that he attempted to offend one whose mind at least had been his "intimate acquaintance, and regarded with a kind of partial tenderness"; Pope has punished his injustice with double sharpness by his manner of receiving it. Not content with writing this humble apology, Hill made it public by printing it in another preface to Pope, in *The Creation*; and he added certain compliments: "I look up to you with extraordinary comfort, as to a new constellation breaking out upon our world with equal heat and brightness, and cross-spangling, as it were, the whole heaven of wit with your Milky Way of genius."⁹

An incident growing out of the publication of *The Northern Star* forms the subject of the next letter, from Pope, six years later. A second edition of the poem appeared in 1724, with a Latin translation by Hill's brother Gilbert; and through this Latin version, the poem "without any design or application of the author . . . reached the hands of that truly great and imperial foreign sovereign in whose praise it was composed."¹⁰ The death of the Czar in March, 1725, was the signal for a third edition, previously announced in the *Plain Dealer*,¹¹ where several

⁸ Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, X, 3.

⁹ Dr. George Sewell, M.D., who favored Hill with some criticism of the poem (*Hill's Works*, II, 406 f.), objected to a constellation as large as the Milky Way; but Hill defends the phrase vehemently—he can make a new constellation of his own as large as he chooses (*Works*, I, 9 f.).

¹⁰ *Plain Dealer*, preface to 1734 ed. Bond there says that he suggested the translation.

¹¹ No. 106.

papers had recently appeared, defending the Czar's treatment of his son and discussing the possible danger of a war with Russia.¹² Shortly after, Hill was "surprised by the condescension of a compliment from the Empress, his relict and immediate successor," in the form of a gold medal,¹³ sent by the Czar's order.¹⁴ Papers relating to him were also promised to Hill, to serve as the basis of a biography; and some of them actually arrived: "I have," he wrote to Pope years later,¹⁵ "papers in my hands, which throw the noblest and most beautiful colors on a circumstance which the malice of some great courts in Europe has taken pains to misrepresent and to blacken. The shortened reign of the lady deprived me of great part of a treasure, which I see, by what came to my hands, had been vast and invaluable."

To these papers, which he evidently supposed were in Hill's hands, Pope refers in the letter of 1726:¹⁶ "What a satisfaction to behold that perfect likeness, without art, affectation, or even the gloss of coloring, with a noble neglect of all that finishing and smoothing, which any other

¹² Nos. 20, 24, 75.

¹³ Preface to 5th ed. of *Northern Star*, 1739.

¹⁴ A Dr. J. Blinman brought the medal, as he reminds Hill in a letter of May 21, 1736 (*Col. of 1751*), expressing a desire to renew their acquaintance.

¹⁵ January 15, 1739, *Works*, I, 327 f. Hill wished Pope to omit a couplet, relating to the Czar's marriage, in one of his satires.

¹⁶ In the *Col. of 1751*, where most of the letters from Pope to Hill were first published. In Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, where all but two of the letters are reprinted, half a dozen are incorrectly stated to have appeared originally in 1753. Several are wrongly dated in the 1751 pamphlet, and the dates corrected by Elwin and Courthope; one, of September 29, 1731, is not corrected—it belongs to the year 1738, as the references to forthcoming tragedies by Thomson and Mallet clearly prove; the play returned to Hill is *Caesar*, not *Athelwold*. The two letters from Pope, not in Elwin and Courthope's edition, are printed in the Life prefixed to Hill's *Dramatic Works*; they are dated July 15 [1738], and January 22 [1739].

hand would have been obliged to bestow on so principal a figure! I write this to a man whose judgment I am certain of. . . . There will be no danger of your dressing this Mars too finely, whose armor is not gold but adamant, and whose style in all probability is much more strong than it is polished." The tone of the entire letter suggests only the most friendly relations between Hill and Pope. They had exchanged poems; Hill had evidently defended Pope against some of the "silly attacks" arising out of the surreptitious publication of the letters to Cromwell. "Nor am I ashamed," declares Pope, "of those weaknesses of mine which they have exposed in print . . . since you have found a way to turn those weaknesses into virtue, by your partial regard of them. . . . I can make you no better return for your great compliment upon me . . . but by telling you, that it is honor enough to reward all my studies, to find my character and reputation is part of the care of that person to whom the fame and glory of Peter Alexiowitz was committed."

There is certainly nothing here to indicate that Pope resented the references to him in the *Plain Dealer* that Mr. Courthope calls uncomplimentary.¹⁷ Praise of Dennis could scarcely be construed as an attack upon Pope, unless to say of Dennis that he had the soul to know how far popularity was from being a mark of living merit is tantamount to a statement that Pope's popularity proves lack of merit.¹⁸ Though no. 116 complains of the omission of Shakespeare's poems from Pope's six-volume edition, no. 16 and no. 68 contain praise enough of his genius to satisfy the vanity of any poet. One of the most moderate passages declares, "The praise of Mr. Pope will be a theme for wit and learning when all the dukes, his patrons, shall be lost in the dust that covers them."

¹⁷ Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, V, 224-226.

¹⁸ Nos. 54 and 82.

Yet, in spite of the absence of provocation in Hill's paper and the great cordiality of the 1726 letter, "A. H." appeared in chapter VI of the *Bathos* (published in March, 1727-8), among the Flying Fish—"writers who now and then rise upon their fins, and fly out of the profound, but their wings are soon dry, and they drop down to the bottom." Possibly Pope had been biding his time to get even for the *Northern Star* preface; possibly he was so impressed with the absurdity of some passages in Hill's works that the critic in him could not refrain from putting Hill where he belonged;¹⁹ possibly Hill's preoccupation with his York Buildings scheme pointed him out as a comparatively safe plaything. But he was not so absorbed in Scotch timber that his sensitive eye failed to light upon his initials. Of course he was quite wrong to think them his: Pope informed him later that the letters were "set at random, to occasion what they did occasion, the suspicion of bad and jealous writers, of which number I could never reckon Mr. Hill, and most of whose names I did not know."²⁰ Unfortunately, this ingenuous explanation did not accompany the initials, and Hill, taking fire promptly, retaliated with a copy of verses on Pope and an epigram on Swift, published in the *Daily Journal* of April 16.

When the *Dunciad* appeared the next month, H--- was present at the diving-match, striving with the dark and dirty party-writers to see who best loved dirt and could fling filth about:

"H--- tried the next, but hardly snatched from sight,
Instant buoys up, and rises into light;
He bears no token of the sable streams,
And mounts far off among the swans of Thames."²¹

¹⁹ Joseph Warton thought the *Bathos* would have been much enriched by Hill's verse (*Essay on Pope*, II, 251).

²⁰ January 26, 1731. *Col. of 1751.*

²¹ Book II, 273 f.

In the next edition (1729), two asterisks replaced the "H---," and the following note was added:²² "This is an instance of the tenderness of our author. The person here intended writ an angry preface against him, founded on a mistake, which he afterwards honorably acknowledged in another printed preface. Since when he fell under a second mistake, and abused both him and his friend. He is a writer of genius and spirit, though in his youth he was guilty of some pieces bordering upon bombast. Our poet here gives him a panegyric instead of a satire, being edified beyond measure by the only instance he ever met with in his life of one who was much a poet confessing himself in an error; and has suppressed his name as thinking him capable of a second repentance."²³

Hill was not much impressed with the tenderness of the reference,—the briefest connection with the filth of that diving-match he regarded, quite rightly, as an insult; and he burst again into poetry. In 1730 appeared "*The Progress of Wit: a Caveat. For the use of an eminent writer. By a fellow of All-Souls. To which is prefixed an explanatory discourse to the reader. By Gamaliel Gunson.*" The discourse, imitated from the introduction to the *Key to the Rape of the Lock*, makes some pretence at anonymity, and jokes heavily about the dark allusions in the work. In the poem itself, Pope is satirized under the name of "tuneful Alexis, the ladies' plaything and the muses' pride," who

²² Book II, 285.

²³ In the edition of 1735 the line appears, "Then P-- essayed"; in the 1736 edition, the two asterisks are replaced, and the note on the line reads: "A gentleman of genius and spirit, who was secretly dipt in some papers of this kind, on whom our poet bestows a panegyric instead of a satire, as deserving to be better employed than in party quarrels and personal invective."

“Desiring and deserving others’ praise,
Poorly accepts a fame he ne’er repays;
Unborn to cherish, sneakingly approves,
And wants the soul to spread the worth he loves.”

Defamed by his irritated fellow-poets, and finally deposed from the top of Pindus, “far-fallen Alexis” sleeps, and sees in a dream the river of life: the current on the left side—full of quicksands concealed by bright, treacherous water, where gnats, wasps, and flies, “tinged with the rainbow’s everchanging dyes,” people the sunshine—leads to oblivion; that on the right—broad, deep, and serene, dotted with green islands and peopled only by swans—leads to fame, the home of joy and peace, “glory unenvied and unslandered gain.” Of the voyagers on the river, some seek the silent side—slowly and with difficulty; others, in their light galleys, shoot swiftly to the shallows and dance away through the “shoaly sunshine,” until caught by whirlpool or rock. Among the glittering boats Alexis sees appear that of a youth “saddened by sickness and o’ercast by spleen,” but with a living light beaming from his eyes,

“And from his voice (for as he sailed he sung)
Such magic sounds of melting music sprung,
That the hushed heaven all downward seemed to bend.”

The Muses are his oarswomen, the Graces trim his sails, green-eyed Envy in the bottom of the boat serves merely as ballast, Fancy spreads a starry mantle over him, and Pleasure, Praise, and Beauty dance the moments away on the deck. Thus guided, he reaches the green islands. But the swans seeming tame company after the joyous throng in the shallow water, the youth steers his boat back, and starts a disdainful war against wasps and flies, while the drones acclaim him the prince of fly-catchers. The dreaming Alexis, much concerned to see the youth sweeping to destruction, beseeches Fancy (the stage-manager of the

vision) to call him by name and stop him. Fancy is amused that Alexis does not himself know the name:

"His is a name that dwells on ev'ry mind,
Tunes every tongue, and sails with ev'ry wind"—

And Alexis hears pronounced his own name—Pope.²⁴

There is unquestionably far more praise than cavilling in this production.²⁵ The criticism that Pope was misdirecting his gifts in waging a war against petty dunces still holds its own. The preface to the *Caveat* speaks to the same purpose with more directness: the author, it states, confines his satire to the poet's folly, not allowing it to attack his wit, "which is not weaker, though less lovely, when it stains itself upon a dirty subject, than when it ornaments beauty itself. . . . What pity that the warmest of a certain gentleman's admirers are lately forced to confess, there are grossnesses in some of his sallies, obscene enough to blot out any wit but their author's; insults low enough to become the most vulgar-spirited among his enemies; and malice animated enough to be beautiful in any of his friends but himself." In his work are to be found, "among virtues we despair of equalling, errors we disdain to imitate."

Until he had fired this shot, Hill did not complain of his inclusion in the *Dunciad*. But now he wrote a guileless letter to Pope, sending him the *Plain Dealers* and a poem written by the promising Urania at the age of eleven, under the inspiration of Pope; and after noting how natural it is for his family to love and admire him, he observed casually: "If, after this, I should inform you that I

²⁴ Southey (*Specimens*, II, 141, 1807) thinks the character of Pope in this poem "particularly just, elegant, and severe."

²⁵ "By the frequency of an advertisement which I have remarked in the daily papers, *The Progress of Wit* seems too slow to be boasted of." *Fog's Journal*, January 2, 1731.

have a gentle complaint to make to and against you, concerning a paragraph in the notes of a late edition of the *Dunciad*, I fear you would think your crime too little to deserve the punishment of so long a letter as you are doomed to on that subject.”²⁶

Pope made haste to get his excuses in ahead of the threatened complaint.²⁷ Without denying that Hill was aimed at in the note, he declares the note itself to be a compliment—“so it has been thought by many, who have asked to whom that passage made that oblique panegyric.” And anyway, why complain to him? “As to the notes, I am weary of telling a great truth, which is, that I am not the author of them.” Mr. Courthope’s comment on this last statement is pertinent: “It is, however, plain that Pope alone could have written a note stating what nobody else could know,—that he had praised Hill in the text because he was the solitary instance of a poet confessing himself in error, and had suppressed his name because he believed him capable of a second repentance.”²⁸ After this typical evasion, Pope assumes the offensive. Has he not good reason to complain of the *Caveat*? It hurts him to be represented as wanting the worth to cherish and befriend men of merit. “I am sorry,” he goes on with an admirable assumption of injured innocence, “the author of that reflection knew me no better, and happened to be unknown to those who could have better informed him; for I have the charity to think he was misled only by his ignorance of me, and the benevolence to forgive the worst thing that ever in my opinion was said of me, on that supposition.” Although he appreciates Hill’s praise of him as a writer, “I only wish you knew as well as I do, how much I prefer

²⁶ January 18, 1731, *Works*, 1753, I, 26 f.

²⁷ Pope to Hill, January 26, 1731. *Col.* of 1751.

²⁸ Elwin and Courthope’s *Pope*, X, 9, note 3.

qualities of the heart to those of the head. I vow to God, I never thought any great matters of my poetical capacity; I only thought it a little better, comparatively, than that of some very mean writers, who are too proud. But I do know certainly, my moral life is superior to that of most of the wits of these days. This is a silly letter, but it will show you my mind honestly."

Hill's reply—a letter better known and more commended than anything else he ever wrote²⁹—showed him more convinced of the truth of the first part of this last statement than of the second:

"Your answer regarding no part of mine but the conclusion, you must pardon my compliment to the close of yours, in return; if I agree with you that your letter is weaker than one would have expected. You assure me that I did not know you so well as I might, had I happened to be known to others, who could have instructed my ignorance; and I begin to find, indeed, that I was less acquainted with you than I imagined. But your last letter has enlightened me, and I can never be in danger of mistaking you for the future.

"Your enemies have often told me that your spleen was at least as distinguishable as your genius; and it will be kinder, I think, to believe them than impute to rudeness or ill manners the return you were pleased to make for the civility, with which I addressed you. I will, therefore, suppose you to have been peevish or in pain, while you were writing me this letter; and upon that supposition shall endeavor to undeceive you. If I did not love you as a good man, while I esteem you as a good writer, I should read you without reflection. And it were doing too much honor to your friends, and too little to my own discernment, to go to them for a character of your mind, which I was able enough to extract from your writings.

²⁹ January 28, 1731 (*Col. of 1751*). "Hill is always considered to have got a victory over Pope in this excellent letter." (Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, X, 11, n. 1). The remonstrance is "both gentlemanly and reasonable" (G. C. Macaulay: *Thomson*, 18).

“But to imitate your love of truth, with the frankness you have taught me, I wish the great qualities of your heart were as strong in you as the good ones. You would then have been above that emotion and bitterness, wherewith you remember things which want weight to deserve your anguish.

“Since you were not the writer of the notes to the *Dunciad*, it would be impertinent to trouble you with the complaint I intended. I will only observe, that the author was in the right to believe me capable of a second repentance; but I hope I was incapable of that second sin, which should have been previous to his supposition. If the initial letters ‘A. H.’ were not meant to stand for my name, yet they were everywhere read so, as you might have seen in *Mist’s Journal* and other public papers; and I had shown Mr. Pope an example how reasonable I thought it to clear a mistake, publicly, which had been publicly propagated. One note, among so many, would have done me this justice; and the generosity of such a proceeding could have left no room for that offensive ‘sneakingly,’ which, though perhaps too harsh a word, was the properest a man would choose, who was satirizing an approbation that he had never observed warm enough to declare itself to the world, but in defence of the great or the popular.

“Again, if the author of the notes knew that ‘A. H.’ related not to me, what reason had he to allude to that character as mine, by observing that I had published pieces bordering upon bombast—a circumstance so independent of any other purpose of the note, that I should forget to whom I am writing, if I thought it wanted explanation.

“As to your oblique panegyric, I am not under so blind an attachment to the Goddess I was devoted to in the *Dunciad*, but that I knew it was a commendation, though a dirtier one than I wished for; who am neither fond of some of the company in which I was listed, the nobler reward for which I was to become a diver, the allegoric muddiness in which I was to try my skill, nor the institutor of the games you were so kind to allow me a share in. Since, however, you could see so clearly that I ought to be satisfied with the praise, and forgive the dirt it was mixed with, I am sorry, it seemed not as reasonable that you should

pardon me for returning your compliment, with more and opener praise, mixed with less of that dirtiness, which we have, both of us, the good taste to complain of.

“The *Caveat*, Sir, was mine. It would have been ridiculous to suppose you ignorant of it; I cannot think you need be told that it meant you no harm; and it had scorned to appear under the borrowed name it carries, but that the whimsical turn of the preface would have made my own a contradiction. I promise you, however, that for the future I will publish nothing without my name that concerns you, or your writings. I have now almost finished an *Essay on Propriety and Impropriety, in Design, Thought, and Expression, illustrated by Examples in both Kinds from the Writings of Mr. Pope*; and, to convince you how much more pleasure it gives me to distinguish your lights than your shades, and that I am as willing as I ought to be to see and acknowledge my faults, I am ready, with all my heart, to let it run thus, if it would otherwise create the least pain in you: *An Essay on Propriety and Impropriety, etc., illustrated by Examples, of the first, from the Writings of Mr. Pope, and of the last, from those of the Author*.

“I am sorry to hear you say you never thought any great matters of your poetry. It is, in my opinion, the characteristic you are to hope your distinction from. To be honest is the duty of every plain man! Nor, since the soul of poetry is sentiment, can a great poet want morality. But your honesty you possess in common with a million who will never be remembered; whereas your poetry is a peculiar, that will make it impossible you should be forgotten. If you had not been in the spleen when you wrote me this letter, I persuade myself you would not, immediately after censuring the pride of writers, have asserted that you *certainly know* your moral life above that of most of the wits of these days; at any other time, you would have remembered that humility is a moral virtue. It was a bold declaration; and the certainty with which you know it stands in need of a better acquaintance, than you seem to have had with the tribe; since you tell me, in the same letter, that many of their names were unknown to you.

“Neither would it appear to your own reason, at a cooler juncture, overconsistent with the morality you are so sure of, to scatter the letters of the whole alphabet annexed at random to characters of a light and ridiculous cast, confusedly, with intent to provoke jealous writers into resentment, that you might take occasion, from that resentment, to expose and deprecate their characters. . . . Upon the whole, Sir, I find I am so sincerely your friend that it is not in your power to make me your enemy; else, that unnecessary air of neglect and superiority, which is so remarkable in the turn of your letter, would have nettled me to the quick; and I must triumph, in my turn, at the strength of my own heart, who can, after it, still find and profess myself, most affectionately and sincerely, your humble servant.”

The “manliness and spirit”³⁰ of this letter is in striking contrast to the evasiveness of Pope’s. Pope’s answer³¹ is humble—a proof that he recognized his adversary’s advantage—but it is not frank; in Dr. Johnson’s words, “he was reduced to sneak and shuffle, sometimes to deny, and sometimes to apologize; he first endeavors to wound, and is then afraid to own that he meant a blow.”³² He begins by proposing mutual forgiveness: he has been guilty of weakness; Hill, of too much warmth. If the letter was silly, so much the more evident was his trust in Hill’s good feeling towards him. He meant to show no incivility or neglect, but merely a frank plainness. Towards the other writers who attacked him, “God knows, I never felt any emotions but what bad writers raise in all men, those gentle ones of laughter or pity; that I was so open, concerned, and serious with respect to you only, is sure a proof of regard, not neglect. For in truth, nothing ever vexed me till I saw your epigram against Dr. S. and me come out in their papers; and this indeed did vex me, to see one swan among

³⁰ Elwin and Courthope’s *Pope*, V, 225.

³¹ February 5, 1731. *Col. of 1751.*

³² *Lives*, ed. G. B. Hill, III, 151.

the geese. That the letters 'A. H' were applied to you in the papers I did not know (for I seldom read them). I heard it only from Mr. Savage, as from yourself, and sent my assurances to the contrary. But I don't see how the annotator on the D--- could have rectified that mistake *publicly*, without particularizing your name, in a book where I thought it too good to be inserted. No doubt he has applied that passage in the D--- to you, by the story he tells; but his mention of *bombast only* in some of your *juvenile pieces*, I think, was meant to show, that passage hinted only at that *allegorical muddiness*, and not at any worse sort of dirt with which some other writers were charged. I hate to say what will not be believed: yet when I told you, many asked me to whom that oblique praise was meant, I did not tell you I answered, it was you. Has it escaped your observation that the name is a syllable too long? Or (if you will have it a Christian name) is there any other in the whole book? Is there no author of two syllables whom it will better fit, not only as getting out of the allegorical muddiness, but as having been *dipt in the dirt of party-writing*, and recovering from it betimes? I know such a man, who would take it for a compliment, and so would his patrons too. But I ask you not to believe this, except you are vastly inclined to it. [Hill would have been vastly credulous if he had done so.] I will come closer to the point: would you have the note left out? it shall. Would you have it expressly said, you were not meant? it shall, if I have any influence on the editors. I believe the note was meant only as a gentle rebuke and friendly; I understood very well the *Caveat* on your part to be the same, and complained (you see) of nothing but two or three lines reflecting on my behaviour and temper to other writers; because I knew they were not true, and you could not know they were." If Hill chooses, he may

confine his examples of impropriety to Pope's works; and he will try to amend them. "It is my morality only that must make me beloved or happy. . . . Therefore it is, Sir, that I much more resent any attempt against my moral character (which I know to be unjust) than any to lessen my poetical one (which, for all I know, may be very just)." With the letter came a peace-offering of the *Odyssey* for Miss Urania.

Pope's equivocation is indeed remarkable, as Mr. Court-hope says,—as remarkable as the "daring with which he laid himself open to a crushing reply."³³ His defense consists of two mutually destructive parts: he meant Hill a compliment, and he did not mean Hill at all. Hill was certainly not too stupid to perceive the opening offered by Pope's shuffling evasions, but he generously declared himself quite willing to forget "the appearance of everything that has been distasteful to either." The objectionable lines in the *Caveat* were added as an afterthought by way of introducing the allegory less abruptly; "but," he adds, "I confess it was unreasonable in me to cover your praise, which I delighted in, under the veil of an allegory, and explain my censure too openly, in which I could take no pleasure." As to the offer to omit the *Dunciad* note, it is kind; "but I am satisfied. It is over, and deserves no more of your application." Then in the last paragraph he makes casual mention of that *Essay on Propriety*, promising to send it to Pope before publication. He also promises the manuscript of a new poem, and requests that Pope star any passage concerning himself of which he does not approve.³⁴

The new poem was *Advice to the Poets*.—*To which is prefixed an Epistle dedicatory to the few great spirits of Great*

³³ Pope, X, 17, n. 1.

³⁴ February 10, 1731. Col. of 1751 (there wrongly dated 1731-1732).

Britain. These few great spirits are the patrons capable of distinguishing between poets and pretenders, and of encouraging the former. Hill calls upon Pope to hear the Muse he invokes:

“she sounds th’inspired decree,
Thou great archangel of wit’s heaven, for thee.”

Half-souled poets may fall foul of one another:

“But let no muse pre-eminent as thine,
Of voice melodious and of force divine,
Stung, by wit’s wasps, all rights of rank forego,
And turn to snarl and bite at every foe.”

A few lines refer to the late quarrel:

“Should even hot rashness erring javelins throw,
And strike our friendly breast, supposed a foe,
How nobler still to undeeive than blame!
And chasten insult with the blush of shame.”

The rest of the poem is chiefly concerned with such advice to poets as to praise merit, strike at oppression, kindle patriotism, and the like. In conclusion, the poet, declaring his preference for obscurity, describes himself as hugging his rest,—an amusing picture of Hill, who could do everything but rest.

Pope evidently starred a few lines, and said of the poem, “The satisfaction it gave me is proportioned to the regard I have for you,”—one of his eminently safe statements.³⁵ He again suggests leaving out the *Dunciad* note,—that is, he thinks the “two lords and one gentleman, who really took and printed that edition,” can be persuaded.³⁶ In his next letter, he expresses himself as pleased with the dedication “equally with the poem,”—safe again! “Our hearts beat just together, in regard to men of power and quality;

³⁵ February 15, 1731. *Col. of 1751.*

³⁶ For comment on this see Elwin and Courthope’s *Pope*, general introduction to the *Dunciad*, vol. IV.

but a series of infirmities, for my whole life has been but one long disease, had hindered me from following your advice.''³⁷

The *Dunciad* quarrel may now be regarded as practically closed, and the victory awarded to Hill. He had inspired his antagonist with respect by pushing him to the wall, and with gratitude by forbearing to take an ungenerous advantage. It must have appeared to Pope better to be a little bored by flattery, better even to return the flattery from time to time, than run the risk of any public exposure as cutting as this private one had been. Whatever were his secret feelings after this, however tiresome or ridiculous he may have thought Hill's works, he avoided open provocation. Hill understood the value of Pope's protestations of sincerity, and Pope knew that he did. Mr. Courthope likes to think of all the subsequent civilities of Pope—his correspondence with Hill, his efforts in behalf of Hill's plays, his reading of Hill's MSS.—as one long penance performed in the consciousness of having injured a worthy man—who knew how to retaliate.³⁸ Indeed, it could scarcely be called anything else, when it involved the reading and re-reading even to the sixth time of a *Caesar*. But there was only one *Caesar*, and there were compensations in Hill's friendship: he had attractive personal qualities—for that there is ample testimony;³⁹ and he might prove useful as an ally.

The rather brisk correspondence for the rest of the year 1731—there are thirteen letters, three only of them Hill's, from September to November 13 alone—is chiefly concerned

³⁷ March 14, 1731. *Col. of 1751*.

³⁸ Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, III, 386, n. 1.

³⁹ Davies (*Life of Garrick*, I, ch. 13) describes him in later life: "his figure, air, and manner were gracefully venerable; with a warm and benevolent mind, he had the delicate address and polite manners of the complete gentleman."

with *Athelwold*, and is devoid of any special interest. With "great timorousness" Pope suggested a few changes in the play, indicated in the margin with his black pencil,— "half afraid to be legible."⁴⁰ And that the fear was justified is evident from the very polite and elaborate explanation Hill gave of his reasons for not adopting some of the emendations;⁴¹ he was not offended, but he took criticism with a deadly seriousness that must have been extremely disconcerting. The death of Hill's wife on June 25, 1731, brought a letter of condolence from Pope⁴² with a more sincere note than usual; Hill appreciated it: "It will never be in my power to forget how compassionate you have been, in calling and sending so often. It is plain, you have none of the fashionable want of feeling for the calamities of others." He asks Pope's advice about a monument to be placed in the Abbey cloisters; "the low and unmeaning lumpishness" in the vulgar style of monuments disgusts him, and he encloses a rough sketch of an idea of his own.⁴³ Pope apparently managed to avoid giving advice on this delicate matter. Two of his letters of this month⁴⁴ refer to his mother's illness and contain invitations to visit Twickenham: "I could wish, if Miss Hill, under a father's authority, might venture, she saw me before I am quite decayed, I mean all of me that is yet half flourishing—my garden." This visit finally took place about October 20.⁴⁵ Once he mentions the quarrel:⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Pope to Hill, June 5, 1731. *Col.* of 1751 (misprinted "Jan.").

⁴¹ October 29, 1731, *Works*, 1753, I, 92. These corrections derive a certain importance from the fact that the handwriting forms part of the evidence used in deciding whether Pope was the author of the emendations in Thomson's *Seasons*. See *Notes and Queries*, 8th S., XII, 389, article by D. C. Tovey.

⁴² September 1, 1731. *Col.* of 1751.

⁴³ September 17, 1731, *Works*, I, 65 f.

⁴⁴ September 3 and 25, 1731. *Col.* of 1751.

⁴⁵ Hill to Wilks, October 23, *Works*, I, 88.

⁴⁶ Pope to Hill, October 9, 1731, *Col.* of 1751.

"I have been as ill as when I writ you that peevish image of my soul, a letter some time since, which had the good effect of making us know one another,"—and which was now, he might have added, forcing him to make interest for Hill's play with Lady Suffolk and even the king and queen.⁴⁷

The failure of *Athelwold* closed that chapter in their correspondence, and the publication (December, 1731) of Pope's *Epistle to the Earl of Burlington—Of False Taste*, a title adopted in the third edition on Hill's suggestion,⁴⁸ opened a new but very brief one, closed after three or four letters. In the storm of criticism aroused by the popular identification of "Timon" in the *Epistle* with the Duke of Chandos, Pope turned to Hill for help. "If there be truth in the world," he writes,⁴⁹ "I declare to you, I never imagined the least application of what I said of Timon could be made to the Duke of Chandos, than whom there is scarce a more blameless, worthy, and generous, beneficent character among all our nobility. . . . I am certain, if you calmly read every particular of that description, you will find almost all of them point blank the reverse of that person's villa."⁵⁰ Noting how awkward it is to fight in defense of one's own work, he adds insinuatingly, "It would have been a pleasure to me, to have found some friend saying a word in my justification, against a most malicious falsehood. . . . Believe me, I would rather never have written a verse in my life, than that any of them should trouble a truly good man. It was once my case before, but happily reconciled; and among generous minds nothing so endears friends as the having offended one

⁴⁷ See letters from Pope to Hill, October 9 and 29, *Col. of 1751*.

⁴⁸ Pope to Hill, February 5, 1732, *Col. of 1751*.

⁴⁹ December 22, 1731, *Col. of 1751*.

⁵⁰ The truth of this statement is discussed in the introduction to *Moral Essay IV*. Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*.

another. I lament the malice of the age, that studies to see its own likeness in everything; I lament the dulness of it, that cannot see an excellence; the first is my unhappiness, the second yours. I look upon the fate of your piece like that of a great treasure, which is buried as soon as brought to light; but is sure to be dug up the next age, and enrich posterity.” He refers in closing to his fear of losing his mother—dearer to him than anything, except his morals.

It seemed impossible for Pope to avoid talking to Hill of his morals. And it annoyed Hill. After Pope’s death, he wrote to Richardson:⁵¹ “One of his worst mistakes was that unnecessary noise he used to make in boast of his morality. It seemed to me almost a call upon suspicion, that a man should rate the duties of plain honesty as if they had been qualities extraordinary. And, in fact, I saw on some occasions that he found those duties too severe for practise; and but prized himself upon the character, in proportion to the pains it cost him to support it.” This may have been one of the occasions Hill had in mind; and perhaps the flattery in the letter was too obviously due to interested motives. At all events, instead of rushing into print in defense of his friend, Hill confesses to having fallen “at the first and second reading . . . into the general construction that had been put upon the character of Timon.” Then, however, he noticed those points of difference already set forth in the newspapers. No doubt, “that unguarded absence of caution, which is a mark by which one may be sure a purpose was either angry or generous” prevented Pope’s realizing the occasion for slander in the name of Timon, in view of the Duke of Chandos’s recent reverse of fortune. He points out a few details that are not “point

⁵¹ September 10, 1744, in Richardson’s *Correspondence*, ed. Mrs. Barbauld, I, 106.

blank the reverse" of the Duke's villa; "as to the many unresembling particulars, they are drowned, like the mistaken predictions of eleven months in an almanac, where the events of the twelfth come by chance to be accomplished." The next paragraph must have annoyed Pope: "But that it is a rule with me to consider the letters I receive from my friends as their own property still, though trusted to my possession, I could more effectually convince him [the Duke] how he ought to think, by letting him see how you think on this subject, in an easy, undesigning, natural indignation, expressed in a private letter, than by all the most labored endeavors of yourself or your friends in public."⁵² There is a suggestion of quiet malice here.

When Pope wrote again,⁵³ it was merely to tell Hill how strongly the Duke had assured him of the "rectitude of his opinion" and his resentment at the report,—an interpretation of the Duke's attitude much more favorable to himself than the Duke's letter warranted.⁵⁴ And then there is a break in the correspondence of nearly a year. Perhaps it is sufficiently accounted for by Hill's failure to take up arms for Pope in this exigency. Or it is barely possible that he may have connected Pope with a fling at *Athelwold* in the *Grub Street Journal* of this month (no. 112): "A play may be called theatrical that is written by any person belonging to the theatre, or that is given to the theatre. . . . Of this sort was *Athelwold*, which, as I am informed, was given to the house; but I don't find that its being theatrical could prevent its dying a natural death soon after its birth." Of course Pope's connection with the paper was not avowed, and may not have been suspected

⁵² Hill to Pope, December 23, 1731, *Works*, I, 106 f.

⁵³ February 5, 1732 (misdated 1730-1 in the *Col.* of 1751).

⁵⁴ Johnson (*Lives*, ed. G. B. Hill, III, 153) says that Pope's letter to the Duke "was answered with great magnanimity, as by a man who accepted his excuse without believing his professions."

by Hill at this time. Or without seeking any more definite explanation, we may assume mere incompatibility of temper. Their intercourse was probably ruffled more than once by little encounters like the following, related by Hill to Richardson some years later:⁵⁵

“There was a verse which Mr. Pope . . . was very fond of: ‘For fools admire, but men of sense approve.’ I used to tell him I abhorred the sentiment, both from its arrogance, and want of truth in nature. We had many contests of this kind; but there are arguers whom heaven, as this same gentleman expresses it extremely well, ‘has cursed with hearts unknowing how to yield.’ And so our battles were usually drawn ones. . . . In the last debate we had upon this subject, I desired to know if he was still . . . convinced Longinus’s remark on the sublime was right?—That the most certain way of knowing it is from the power in some idea touched enthusiastically to move the blood and spirits into transport by a thrilling kind of joy. . . . He owned it was the strongest definition of the true sublime that could be possibly imagined; but was sure only men of genius could conceive it. Whereupon I asked him whether joy and transport and enthusiasm and a thrill of blood could possibly consist with want of admiration? He perceived the use I made of his concession, and said nothing, till I added this new question: Whether only fools admire, if only men of genius are susceptible of a sublimity of admiration? In some perplexity to find a better answer, he was forced to satisfy himself with saying that Longinus’s remark was truth; but like certain truths of more importance, it required assent from faith, without the evidence of demonstration.” Hill then said he had seen it demonstrated, at a play-reading at Lord Tyrconnel’s: in the course of a discussion about the difficulty of delicate

⁵⁵ October 13, 1746. Richardson’s *Correspondence*, I, 112.

and manly praise, a gentleman of rank and genius had repeated Pope's lines to Oxford, declaring that he never could read them without rapture, and looking his rapture as he spoke. Pope, of course, asked who the gentleman was, and Hill named the Speaker of the House of Commons. Pope's manner of receiving the compliment—"with a strained supercilious smile," and the comment, "the Speaker is a man remarkable for heat and passion, and such transports will be common to such tempers,"—disgusted Hill to such an extent that he never afterwards recovered the opinion he then lost of "that (too loud) pretension to high morals" Pope liked to make on all occasions. Such contemptuous disregard of praise was in too marked contrast to his earlier sedulous seeking after it.⁵⁶

It was Pope who renewed their intercourse by sending Hill his *Epistle of the Use of Riches*. Hill, glad to know that Pope has "good-nature enough to remember one who must have seemed not to have deserved the distinction," refers to other favors from Pope, not acknowledged sooner because he has a plan of doing it shortly.⁵⁷ He may have had in mind a defense of Pope such as he intended for the *Weekly Miscellany*, though it was not printed there, and perhaps never sent; it is in the Forster MS. and undated. After quoting from Pope's "late imitation of Horace,"⁵⁸ he declares its beauties ought to "exempt him from being accountable, like other men, for the transports of spleen or anguish." Hill's next letter,⁵⁹ four months later, dis-

⁵⁶ The play-reading referred to was that of *Athelwold* at Lord Tyrconnel's, December, 1731, when Speaker Onslow was present and spoke of Pope with esteem. See Hill's letter to Onslow, December 16, *Works*, I, 344. The conversation with Pope may not have taken place until some months later.

⁵⁷ Hill to Pope, January 16, 1733, *Works*, I, 126.

⁵⁸ Published February 14, 1733.

⁵⁹ May 16, 1733, *Works*, I, 128.

poses of the necessary business of flattery briefly, by thanking Pope for the *Imitation* and enclosing in return some lines he had sent from Newcastle five or six years before, brushed up for this occasion;⁶⁰ his real object is an inquiry about the stage patent. Pope is delighted at the partiality Hill displays for him as man and poet; as to the verses, it would be wronging sense and poetry not to say they were fine ones, and "such as I could not forget, having once seen them."⁶¹ The latter statement might be made of much of Hill's poetry.

During the rest of the year, they continued on a basis of courteous invitation and polite inquiry, with occasional excursions into the realms of gardening and the stage.⁶² Pope admired a little obelisk of Jersey shells in Hill's garden—his house was in Petty France, overlooking St. James's Park, where Pope sometimes came to wait upon him,—and Hill promptly sent a package of the shells to embellish the marine temple at Twickenham. For the obelisk Pope designs to build there, Hill offers shells, material, and workmanship. Pope thanks him for the pretty shells, the more agreeable letter, and the most excellent translation of Voltaire; and after a little talk of Dennis's distress and Thomson's new poem, the letters cease.

To account for the silence of nearly five years that follows, it has been conjectured that Hill wore out Pope's patience with importunate requests for criticism upon his

⁶⁰ Perhaps the lines to Pope, *Works*, III, 9.

⁶¹ May 22, 1733, *Col.* of 1751.

⁶² See letters of Hill to Pope, September 20 (*Works*, II, 178), November 10 (I, 343), November 7 (I, 177); and of Pope to Hill, November 13 (*Col.* of 1751). Lady Walpole also admired the rock-work in Hill's garden, and inquired after the compositions he used; he tells her, and also describes for her a Temple of Happiness, with grottos of Power, Riches, and so on, and innumerable statues. (Hill to Lady Walpole, May and June, 1734, *Works*, I, 190 and 199).

work.⁶³ The correspondence so far discussed does not indicate this; one might read *Athelwold* and *Zara* several times without distress. If Hill solicited assistance in securing audiences, Pope in his turn sought defense against public attack. A more likely explanation is to be found in a lively controversy that took place between the *Prompter* and the *Grub Street Journal*.

Hill started the *Prompter* in November, 1734, about a year after the last letter quoted. A few months later, discussion of Matthew Tindal, the famous freethinker, who had died in 1733, began to occupy the newspapers.⁶⁴ Eustace Budgell's paper, the *Bee*, published among other things his will—the will Budgell is accused of forging—and a prayer. Over this philosopher's prayer, the *Grub Street Journal*,⁶⁵ as the champion of Christianity, began to wage a fierce war with the *Bee*, and for months the battle raged. In the 98th number of October 17, the *Prompter* (probably Popple, as the signature is "P") rashly entered the lists by remarking upon the meanness of mind of those who take every occasion to manifest a dislike; the *Bee*, for instance, has incurred the hostility of a set of obscure writers by its defense of a prayer.⁶⁶ And it is a very good prayer, too,—a decent and modest declaration, justified as philosophy or reason, with which faith and revelation have nothing to do. *Grub Street* turned with zest to its new antagonist, and printed a dialogue between *Prompterus* and *Pufferus Secundus* (the *Bee*):⁶⁷

⁶³ Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, X, 53, n. 1.

⁶⁴ No. 265 of the *Grub Street Journal*, January 21, 1735, printed an attack upon his character.

⁶⁵ No. 296, August 28, 1735.

⁶⁶ Hill was on good terms with the *Bee*: in February 1733, the *Bee* printed Hill's verses on Dryden's monument; in May 1733, a scene from *Zara*; and in June 1733, the *Address from the Statues of Stowe to Lord Cobham*.

⁶⁷ No. 304, October 23.

Prompt. I've advertised and puffed this thing of mine
In vain, though got to No. 99.

Puff. Write 'gainst the Grubs. 'Twill give it a new motion,
If you'll defend my prayer's profound devotion.

Prompt. 'Twould fill, to answer all their damned reflections,
Three Prompters.

Puff. Snap at two or three objections.
This still has been my way. In puffs I'll bully,
And tell the world that you have answered fully.

The *Prompter*⁶⁸ retaliated by quoting another prayer, with the supposed critical emendations of Bavius of Grub Street.⁶⁹ The only drawback to the effectiveness of the retort is that the emendations, meant to ridicule Grub Street criticism, strike one as rather better than the prayer. *Grub Street*,⁷⁰ in a counter attack of more serious nature, accused the author of the *Prompter* of deism and infidelity. Puffs of the *Prompter* in recent numbers of the *Daily Journal* inspire an epigram:

“These twins of different name,
Prompter and *Daily Journal*, are the same.”

At this point, “B,” probably Hill himself, takes a hand.⁷¹ his remarks on intemperance and scurrility in argument are directed against *Grub Street*'s attempt to restrain free thinking; his epigrams are levelled not only against the paper, but against Pope. The first merely

⁶⁸ Nos. 101 and 102.

⁶⁹ The headquarters of the Knights of the Bathos were at the Sign of the Pegasus in Grub Street; the pretended secretary of the society was called Bavius. A man named Russel, a non-juring clergyman, ran the paper, but Pope was the power behind the management, from 1730 to about 1735. See in Thomas R. Lounsbury's *Text of Shakespeare* (1906), ch. XIX on the *Grub Street Journal*.

⁷⁰ No. 307.

⁷¹ No. 107, November 18.

notes how sad it would be, if a paper, called *Grub Street* in jest, should really live up to the name. The second hits at Pope's well-known use of the journal for attacks and defenses in his own behalf:

"P -- e, who oft overflows both with wit and with spleen,
Felt the want of a dung-cart to keep himself clean;
So he furnished a priest with a carriage, ding-dong,
And made him his drayman to drive it along."

Henceforth the *Prompter* always characterizes the *Grub Street Journal* as Pope's drayman. In no. 308, *Grub Street* varies the attack by scornful comments on the false quantities in a Latin epigram published in no. 105 of the *Prompter*. And then the latter prints an adverse criticism of Pope as a satirist, ostensibly by a correspondent.⁷² Back came an epigram:⁷³

"In quiet let Tindal's adopted inherit;
Complain of great men and his own slighted merit;
Let him rail, let him rail, be eternally railing
At priests and the Christian religion's prevailing.
Let the *Prompter*, his second, too take up the cudgel,
And weakly and formally vindicate Budgell;
If the Gospel e'er suffer from two such infectors,
The world must be crazy, or Beech-Oil projectors."

And so it went on. "P" and the reverend drayman quarrel over faith, reason, Socrates, Christianity, and a state religion; make elaborate reductio-ad-absurdums of each other's arguments; and comment acrimoniously on the philosophic temper exhibited in each other's epigrams. Before the end of December, they are disputing over the proper use of a Latin word, and calling each other snails and toads.⁷⁴ As a welcome variation, there is some ridicule

⁷² Nos. 108 and 111.

⁷³ No. 310.

⁷⁴ *Grub Street Journal*, nos. 311-315. *Prompter*, nos. 112 and 119.

of the "mystical verbology" of the *Prompter's* English style: what can possibly be meant by an "actor general, plastic, and unspecificate?"⁷⁵ The reader may well echo the question. The death of the drayman, in a mock battle with Horace, Livy, and others,⁷⁶ is reported in no. 128; but for all that, his ghost continues to hover over his cart. More trouble, enlivened by charges of plagiarism, arose over Popple's play, *The Double Deceit*, and *The Man of Taste*, supported by the *Grub Street Journal*.

An interesting fact connected with this unedifying dispute is that both Pope and Hill disclaimed any share in it,—a denial that was certainly disingenuous in one case, and probably so in the other. Pope denied⁷⁷ that he had ever had "the least hand, direction, or supervisal, or the least knowledge" of the author of the paper; yet it has been proved beyond all doubt that he was a contributor. And Hill wrote to Richardson⁷⁸ about "the angry and unjust personalities" appearing against him in the *Grub Street Journal*, misrepresenting him as the defender of the prayer and the assailant of *The Man of Taste*; "as you know," he adds, "that I have nothing to answer for on either of these two heads, having never seen any of those papers, till I read them in the published *Prompters*, I should take it as a favor, if you would immediately find means to undeceive the gentlemen concerned." He declares that he knows neither the author nor the publisher of the paper, and does not wish to defend himself publicly, because he hates personal bickerings among writers. It seems incredible that Hill did not connect Pope with the

⁷⁵ *Grub Street Journal*, no. 320, February 12, 1736.

⁷⁶ The battle is described in no. 123. The reverend militant who succeeded Russel was Miller, another of Pope's partisans.

⁷⁷ In a note on line 378 of his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. See Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, III, 270, n. 2.

⁷⁸ March 6, 1735-6, Forster MS.

attacks, when his collaborator Popple did. In spite of all denials, it remains true that two papers, one connected with Hill, the other with Pope, were for months calling each other names in a most offensive manner, over the deceased Dr. Tindal's very uninteresting prayer. It was not the way to cement friendly relations between them. Pope, it is true, inquired kindly after Hill through Thomson, but Hill's acknowledgment shows resentment: he is glad Pope remembers him, but adds, "I am made sure, by some reasons I have to be convinced we think differently of each other, that my esteem for him is the effect of his excellencies, because it could have no ground to grow in, if it were the return of partiality."⁷⁹ When the *Memoirs of the Society of Grub Street* was published in 1737, the preface contained a condescending reference to "our late unsuccessful brother the Promter," which could scarcely have been palatable to Hill. And so at last the whole affair ended, having amounted to nothing but bickering, stupid at best, indecent at worst.

It must have been to Pope something of a shock to receive in May, 1738,⁸⁰ an eighteen-page letter from his former correspondent, once more threatening the publication of the *Essay on Propriety*,—perhaps to even up things after the *Grub Street* episode. The sight of some of Pope's "vegetable children" in Lady Peterborough's garden had reminded Hill of Pope, and the prospect of leisure reminded him of the essay.⁸¹ As he finds, in looking over it, that many examples reflect upon Pope, he wishes to submit

⁷⁹ Hill to Thomson, May 20, 1736, *Works*, I, 236.

⁸⁰ *Works*, I, 248 f.

⁸¹ "After having vainly aspired to be active to some good ends and good offices, which I am not allowed the prosperity that was necessary for effectually reaching, all I now find remaining as a task for my future solitude is to learn to be lazy without spleen, and submit to be useless with temper."

them to his final decision. Part of the essay deals with propriety of expression—too often violated. For instance, just as “shagged” in one of Pope’s lines could have no other word substituted for it without loss, so “scour” in the lines on Camilla is unfortunate—it checks the speed of the idea he has been trying to convey, and suggests pressure, attrition, adherence. Other examples follow, though of course improprieties in Pope are few indeed! He then turns to the *Bathos*. He scarcely expects to trouble the public with his reflections on that, but urges Pope to assure himself of the justice of his censures; for if they are unjust, the disgrace attached to the victim will be transferred to the censurer. The criticism of Theobald is one he thinks unwarranted in some respects. He closes with the acknowledgment that he could go on in this way much longer, though his letter is already of an “unmerciful length,”—as it was.

Pope’s reply, with its protestations of sincerity and its attempt to shift responsibility, is almost an echo of earlier letters.⁸² As to Theobald, he never supposed the play containing the lines in question was Theobald’s; Theobald himself said it was Shakespeare’s; and besides, it was Dr. Arbuthnot who collected many of the passages censured in the *Bathos*. If Mr. Hill only knew Pope the man! The trouble was that Mr. Hill did. “You can hardly conceive how little either pique or contempt I bear to any creature, unless for immoral or dirty actions.” Criticize me as a poet to your heart’s content, but spare my character as an honest man.

The “civil reproach” Hill detected in the letter made him question whether Pope was not displeased at his freedom; rather than displease him, he will burn the

⁸² June 9, 1738. *Col. of 1751.*

essay.⁸³ To prove the general neglect of propriety, he needed examples from the living chief of poets: to select from dead authors only seemed a meanness, and to cite from his own, "though full enough, God knows, of absurdities," would have looked assuming and silly. He is glad to hear that Arbuthnot made the collection; yet it was published under Pope's name, and "whatever a man sets his hand to, he ought first to examine the truth of." With a provoking air of friendly sincerity, he goes on: "I am charmed while I hear you disclaim that propensity to pique and contempt, which, to speak with the soul of a friend, seems to me the only spot on your character. We are all of us, in some lights or other, the dupes of our natural frailties; and when Mr. Pope, with the warmth that becomes a great mind, tells me how far he is from despising defects in men's genius—never feeling any contempt but for the dirt of their actions,—I am sure he says nothing but what he firmly believes to be true. . . . In the meantime, 'tis pity that a thinker so humane and benevolent should indulge an ambiguity in the turn of his expression, that scatters gall which his heart never licensed." He admits his own too great quickness in apprehending indignities, and proclaims the desirability of free reproof between friends. Renewed assurances⁸⁴ of Pope's good-will convinced him that they must have been born to be lovers; "we are so often and so unaccountably mistaking one another into reserves and resentments. . . . In plain truth and English, I always did and I still do most affectionately esteem you, both as man and as poet. And if now and

⁸³ Hill to Pope, June 17, 1738, *Works*, II, 398. Hill actually did burn the essay, in 1739, during a "long and melancholy illness," sacrificing it "to a suspicion which I apprehended I had grounds for, that my design . . . would disoblige where it intended service." *Works*, II, 217.

⁸⁴ June 20, 1738, *Col. of 1751*.

then, for a start, I have been put out of humor with either, I would fain have you think it was no less your own fault than mine." He suggests that they rest the debate, and "either resolve to let fall an unconfiding and cold correspondence, or much rather agree (if you please) to understand one another better for the future." As a proof of his respect, he sends the play of *Caesar* for Pope's criticism.⁸⁵

Caesar takes up the greater part of the remaining correspondence, and makes it intolerably tedious. Bolingbroke, who came back to England about July of this year and stayed at Twickenham, was honored no less than Pope with the disquisitions upon Caesar. And they really read the play and the essay—their comments prove it.⁸⁶ No doubt, they had a little quiet fun at Hill's expense, but they did not buy it easily. There is a certain satisfaction in the thought of Pope and Bolingbroke toiling over the play and the letters. When one says the sentiments of the tragedy are "noble, beyond the power of words";⁸⁷ or when the other declares he never met with "more striking sentences";⁸⁸ or when Mr. Pope and his noble friend doubt "whether, in some few instances, the utmost effort of language has not obscured the beauty and force of thought," one lingers thoughtfully over the compliments. All three are adepts in flattery—Hill perhaps the greatest. References by Hill⁸⁹ to the involved state of his affairs bring forth regrets from the other two at their inability to raise his fortune, but since that is impossible, they beg the privilege of reading *Caesar* once or twice more.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ June 25, 1738, *Col.* of 1751.

⁸⁶ See letter of Pope to Hill, September 12, 1738. *Col.* of 1751.

⁸⁷ Bolingbroke to Hill, July 21, 1738. *Works*, II, 417.

⁸⁸ Pope to Hill, July 21, 1738. *Col.* of 1751.

⁸⁹ Hill to Pope, August 29, 1738. *Works*, I, 295.

⁹⁰ This was at least the fifth reading, for Hill, about to send back

Among the last letters, chiefly on the theatrical situation and the conflicting claims of the plays of Mallet, Thomson, and Hill, is one that suggests why the correspondence presently came to an end. Pope could read and criticize Hill's plays and listen to all he had to say about them; he could bear with Hill's criticism of himself; but to receive from him a nine-page analysis of Thomson's *Agamemnon*, to be communicated to Thomson by word of mouth, must have warned him of new and unexpected dangers in the correspondence.⁹¹ He promised to carry out the commission,⁹² but it was not long before the letters ceased. Perhaps they had proved too "unconfiding and cold." Shortly after, Hill had a serious illness that lasted many months and would in any case have cut short his letter-writing.

Through their common friend, Mallet, they exchanged from time to time polite assurances of affection⁹³—an affection on Hill's part merely polite. In the soothing atmosphere of Richardson's sympathy, his smouldering resentment against Pope at last found vent. Richardson opened the way for discussion by some rather ill-natured remarks on Pope's abuse of his talent in personal satire.⁹⁴ Charmed by these generous truths, Hill added a few others: "His genius is not native or inventive; it is a verbal flexibility of expressiveness that now and then throws such light on his couplets. He can add a door or a window to another man's house, but he would build very badly on a new plan . . . of his own. . . . As to his *Essay on Man* . . . the corrected MS., mercifully remembers that Pope has already read it four times (Hill to Pope, August 29, 1738. *Works*, I, 295).

⁹¹ November 8, 1738. *Works*, I, 308.

⁹² Pope to Hill, December 8, 1738.

⁹³ Hill to Mallet, March 17 and August 12, 1742 (MS. quoted in Elwin and Courthope's *Pope*, X, 78).

⁹⁴ January 19, 1744. Forster MS.

you are very kind to his genius, when you consider that as a proof of it, when the versification, I am afraid, is his whole, and the matter and design my lord Bolingbroke's. And yet, there is always here and there, in whatever he writes, something so expressed to bewitch us, that I cannot, for my soul, help admiring him."⁹⁵ This unwilling admission is worth all the rest. After Pope's death, Hill turned prophet.⁹⁶ "Mr. Pope, as you with equal keenness and propriety express it, is gone out. I told a friend of his, who sent me the first news of it, that I was sorry for his death, because I doubted whether he would live to recover the accident."

Presently he began to plan the publication of Pope's letters—"writ in controversial clashes between him and me on three distinct occasions, which, but that he begged me not to let the public see, would do him hurt, beyond all possible belief of those who took him for a general genius."⁹⁷ Richardson told Hill to go ahead, and Hill agreed that Pope deserved no delicacy; "neither was I under absolute promise; tho' he begged me to conceal his letters, after being stung into sense of the gross openings he had left in 'em against himself by some not over tender uses I drew thence to punish a too negligent vanity."⁹⁷

Quite surprisingly, the famous *Essay on Propriety*, burned in 1739, reappears once more to threaten Pope's fame—Hill's memory apparently served him as well as a manuscript. The tract will show that Pope knew nothing as to plan or thought that merited the name of genius, though "in Figure and Expression . . . he had Beauties equal to the Best." But to give a resistless demonstration, he has taken pains to go through the whole *Essay on Man*,

⁹⁵ Hill to Richardson, 1744. Richardson's *Correspondence*, I, 108.

⁹⁶ Hill to Richardson, September 10, 1744, *ibid.*, I, 104.

⁹⁷ See letters from Hill to Richardson, July 10 and 21, 1746; and from Richardson to Hill, July, 1746. Forster MS.

“and without changing any Thought, or meddling with his general Design or Mode of executing it, only expressed his meanings, as he aimed, himself, to have expressed 'em.” His own description of the *Essay* after this audacious attempt is delightfully appropriate: “Shall I, by way of curiosity only, send you his so mortified *Essay on Man?*”⁹⁸ Richardson was inexpressibly obliged;⁹⁹ and though he had time to read only six pages, he was amazed at the “obviousness as well as justness of the corrections.” He passed the *Essay* on to Speaker Onslow, who tactfully observed that Hill undervalued his genius by giving anything of his not wholly his.¹⁰⁰

The mortified *Essay on Man* never saw the light. The letters appeared after Hill’s death; and though they have done no appreciable hurt to Pope’s literary fame, they have scarcely strengthened his claim to honesty.

⁹⁸ Hill to Richardson, July 29, 1746. Forster MSS.

⁹⁹ Richardson to Hill, August 5, 1746. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Richardson to Hill, November 7, 1748. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VII

HILL AND RICHARDSON

In 1738, Pope had been annoyed by an attack in the *Gazetteer*, then printed by Richardson; and Hill, in the letter that closes his correspondence with Pope, attempts to absolve Richardson from responsibility: “I did not recollect, till you told it me, that the *Gazetteers* were printed by Mr. Richardson. I am acquainted with none of their authors; . . . and, as to Mr. Richardson himself (among whose virtues I place it that he knows and considers you rightly), there should be nothing imputed to the printer, which is imposed for, not by him, on his papers, but was never impressed on his mind. I am very much mistaken in his character, or he is a plain-hearted, sensible, and good-natured honest man. I believe, when there is anything put into his presses with a view to such infamous slander, . . . he himself is the only man wounded: for I think there is an openness in his spirit that would even repel the profits of his business, when they were to be the consequence of making war upon excellence.”¹

With Richardson, whom he thus defends so ingeniously, Hill had been corresponding at intervals for over two years. The close of his friendship with the great poet of the age thus coincides with the early stages of that with the novelist soon to become famous. The two friendships offer interesting contrasts. Pope and Hill loved each other with certain reservations: they were always on their guard after that *Dunciad* episode,—Hill doubtful of Pope’s sincerity and, in spite of himself, jealous of his popularity; Pope

¹ February 21, 1739. *Works*, I, 334.

quite justly uneasy about his moral character, and never certain at what moment Hill would exhibit unexpected acuteness. The relations of Hill and Richardson were of quite a different sort: there was no room for jealousy—they were competing for public favor in different fields; they needed each other—Hill's circumstances required sympathy and help, and Richardson, distrustful of his own powers, needed the stimulus of constant flattery and encouragement; their tastes were similar—they liked to write long letters about their works and their nerves and their medicines, they both had a horror of Milton's prose,² and neither had sense of humor enough to disturb the other. In its interchange of elaborate compliment and enthusiastic commendation, the correspondence recalls the Clio days, with the relative importance and influence of the writers reversed. It is the most important so far discussed: that with Pope merely adds further confirmation to facts about him accessible elsewhere; that with Richardson is essential for the story of his life during the crucial years when *Pamela* and *Clarissa* were written. From March, 1736, to August, 1749, there are more than one hundred and fifty letters, preserved partly in Hill's *Works*, partly in the first volume of Richardson's *Correspondence*, but chiefly in the MS. folios of the Forster Collection at South Kensington.³ These letters have already been drawn upon in the discussion of Hill's projects and his relations with Pope; what remains to be considered are the great events of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, with a background of Richardson's nervous tremors, Hill's family misfortunes, and his undying literary aspirations.

The acquaintance perhaps began in business dealings, for

² Hill to Richardson, May 29, 1738. *Works*, I, 267.

³ When not otherwise stated, the references are to letters in the Forster Collection. Austin Dobson, in his *Fielding*, 1883, was the first to make use of the Hill letters in the Forster MSS.

the letters of 1736, aside from the usual amenities, are mainly concerned with printing arrangements for *Alzira*. The next year Hill was involved in financial difficulties that placed him in the spring "under an unexpected obligation to retire abroad."⁴ In April he was in Southampton, where the memory of a visit twenty years before with his wife inspired him to verse.⁵ In May he was in Guernsey and in Jersey, visiting on friendly terms with General Fielding and Governor Grahame;⁶ and in June, in Edinburgh.⁷ Less than a year later, he wrote from Buxton Wells in Derbyshire that during his solitary ramble of many months he had visited some of "our own and neighboring sea-coasts."⁸ A letter of July 5, 1738, from Gilbert Hill, an accomplished beggar, to Sir Hans Sloane, declares (in Latin) that the absence of his brother from London for more than a year, "suis rebus domesticis se bene non habentibus," has increased his own troubles.⁹ Hill's affairs must have straightened themselves out to some extent shortly afterwards, for at the end of July he was planning to settle outside of London, after selling the best part of a too little fortune;¹⁰ and at the end of the year he went with his daughters to live at Plaistow, in Essex, east of London. Plaistow was at the time a "pleasant rural village," though flat and marshy, "with roomy old houses and large gardens, famous like Banstead Down for its mutton."¹¹ Hill expected to make it famous for its vineyards. From 1739, Richardson spent much of his time at

⁴ Hill to Richardson, October, 1737. Richardson's *Correspondence*, I, 11.

⁵ *Alone in an Inn at Southampton*, *Works*, III, 331.

⁶ *Works*, 1754 ed., I, 332-333.

⁷ Hill to Urania Hill, June 23, 1737. *Works*, 1754 ed., I, 335.

⁸ Hill to Pope, May 11, 1738. *Works*, I, 248.

⁹ Sloane MSS. 4055. f. 347.

¹⁰ Hill to Pope, July 31, 1738. *Works*, I, 290.

¹¹ Austin Dobson: *Richardson*, 66.

North End, near Hammersmith turnpike; and as it was evidently no easy matter to get from Plaistow in the east to Hammersmith in the west, Hill and Richardson had to carry on their intercourse chiefly by letter.¹²

There are a few pleasant pictures of the Plaistow home,—“a quiet, and not quite unpleasant solitude; a place that seems to have been only formed for books, and meditation, and the Muses.”¹³ Astraea Hill tries to persuade Mrs. Richardson to visit them:¹⁴ “not that we have, here, any beauties to boast of, except those of Nature and Innocence, and those, too, are confined to the Garden. Our House is too Old, and we ourselves are too New, to be worth the Regard of the Curious. But without doors, I hope, we can make you Amends: for there we have Silence, and Water, and Wood enough, and Vineyards, and Rockwork, and a good deal of outlet all around us. We have also one nobler Delight, that of changing deserts into groves . . . daily employing ourselves in contriving new Views, and new Walks, and new Grottos.”¹⁵

But pleasant glimpses are rare. In the spring of 1739, while setting out his vines, Hill was “surprised by an ague”; and though from time to time in the following

¹² Lord Hervey writes (November 27, 1736) of the road between Kensington and St. James that it had “grown so infamously bad, that we live here in the same solitude as we should do if cast on a rock in the middle of the ocean, and all the Londoners tell us there is between them and us a great impassable gulf of mud.” (*Memoirs of the Reign of George II*, ed. J. W. Croker, 1884, II, 362, n. 9.)

¹³ Hill to Richardson, January, 1743. Richardson’s *Corres.*, I, 88.

¹⁴ December 17, 1740.

¹⁵ The young ladies went angling for carp, like Pamela; and once, under the spell of her sweet compassion, they saved the lives of a bagful of eels by throwing them into the carp pond; the ungrateful “reptile rascals” ate the carp, and had to be drawn out of the pond with garden rakes by the Misses Hill, to the great amusement of their father (Hill to Richardson, November 25, 1748).

months he speaks of an improvement or a relapse, the effects of this illness lasted for more than a year. Agues continued to surprise the whole family. "My daughters have been sensible some time," he writes in 1742 (February 25), "that Plaistow has a moist, malignant Air, that makes severe and lasting Agues a sure consequence of their indulging a sweet evening Walk, or disregarding Change of Wind to the cold quarters." He describes himself, a few months later, as shrinking away in flesh and spirit, with neither strength nor appetite, and all the family in the same condition, or just recovered from it; he has lost a gardener of unusual accomplishments, and has, in fact, seen most of the inhabitants of "this unlucky and ill-chosen place" buried.¹⁶ Once, Astraea's languor was overcome by the "animated ideas" of *Clarissa*,¹⁷ but only such extraordinary remedies were effective.

Yet Hill was much more concerned about the tremors of Richardson than the agues of his own household. For his benefit, he recalls the sweating-tent (no bigger than a hoop-skirt) which he had seen in Turkey and Persia; he discusses hot and cold baths and their effects on different "habits" of body; the Bath waters and the Scarborough waters; vinegar for the gout; and large doses of coffee for Richardson's dizziness. The latter tried the coffee, but unfortunately found his dizziness increase under the treatment. Bishop Berkeley's tar-water is of "infinite extent in its virtue," if made with water in which oak shavings have been boiled.¹⁸ Though he prescribed with a blithe

¹⁶ October 24, 1742. Richardson's *Corres.*, I, 80.

¹⁷ December, 1747.

¹⁸ This oak-tincture is responsible for a rare touch of levity: Hill, suddenly realizing the absurdity of a phrase wishing health to all the pretty shooting branches of his friend's family, adds, "How natural the step, from such a wooden Metaphor, to put you in mind of your Oak-Tincture" (October 25, 1746).

assurance, Hill knew little of the condition of his patient; for when he saw him for the first time after some years, he was surprised and touched "with an Extremity of grief, to mark the shakings of so strong a hand."¹⁹ Richardson, in his turn, recommended the smoky air of London and asses' milk, and urged the Hills at one time to take possession of North End in the absence of his own family.²⁰

It was not willingly that the Hills remained in what Richardson called "that terrible marsh-pit." In 1742 (February 25), they had two other places in mind nearer London; and in July of the same year, Hill had been looking at a little estate to the north. In November, 1744, they were planning to leave Plaistow the next spring; and again in 1747 (December 3), they limited their stay to one summer more. The obstacle in the way seems to have been a long-drawn-out Chancery suit. In the midst of his illness in 1739, Hill was compelled to go to town "to settle accounts with just such a tedious and slow-paced executor as I would wish to your enemy's purposes."²¹ He returned to Essex in a very melancholy frame of mind, his nerves shaken by his anger at the "Injustice and Tricks of the Low-hearted."²² The person responsible for the trouble figures in the letters as "a little Villain, whom the Defect (or rather slowness of Pace in the Helps) of our Laws has impowered to perplex my Affairs," and as "a vile wretch, who has trifled with me these four or five years past, in

¹⁹ February, 1749.

²⁰ October 29, 1742. *Corres.*, I, 83. For all these medical discussions, the correspondence is not so lugubrious as that of Richardson and Dr. Young. Hill notes that people die at Plaistow, but he does not, like Young, ring their knells: "as I was going to fold my letter, I heard a second knell" (Richardson's *Corres.*, II, 10).

²¹ Hill to Richardson, December 19, 1739. Richardson's *Corres.*, I, 33.

²² December 23, 1739.

matters of the utmost importance.”²³ Between 1744 and 1746, the little villain gives place to a still more troublesome law-suit; and “dull and turbulent Law Processes” were in full swing by July 21, 1746, when Hill and his daughters were awaiting “the issue of the Suit we have been fore’d into, by One of their Trustees, upon the Other’s death, in great arrears to us—and his own Circumstances much entangled.”²⁴ Perhaps money from his wife’s family was left in trust for his daughters; and possibly the trustee who died in debt was the vile wretch of a few years before.²⁵ From 1746 until his death, Hill vainly expected each term to see the end of this suit.²⁶ He grew convinced that “the Pit poor Joseph was cast into was a mouse-hole in Comparison with John Bull’s bottomless one”;²⁷ and as late as January, 1749, he had a “huge paltry Barricade of Chancery Lumber thrown up . . . with a long vile Perplexity of stamped accounts to disentangle; which the most persisting Courage in the World would stagger at assaulting.”

There were other troubles besides this of the law-suit. In May, 1739, “an unhappy fugitive” from the family (perhaps a nephew, from the nature of the allusions) died under circumstances that pointed to murder, but proved to be suicide, as Hill told Richardson in confidence.²⁸

²³ January 8, 1740. Richardson’s *Corres.*, I, 37.

²⁴ July 10, 1746. He made some application early in 1744 (*Corres.*, I, 108).

²⁵ As no names are mentioned by Hill and the nature of the action is only vaguely indicated, the tracing of the suit is more difficult than important. A search through the lists of Chancery suits for 1744-1746, with the names of Hill and his daughters as clues, brought no result.

²⁶ See, for instance, his letters of December 3, 1747, and January 11, 1749.

²⁷ May 5, 1748.

²⁸ Richardson’s *Corres.*, I, 24.

Within a few months, his daughter Urania, Thomson's "young darling of the Muses,"²⁹ made a rash love-match with a Mr. Johnson, whom after his death, seven years later, Hill described as an honest, modest man. But at the time Hill was much offended, for in mentioning his daughters he adds, "the only two of 'em, I mean, whom I now own as such."³⁰ Mr. Johnson heedlessly ran through a good fortune of his own and a better of his wife's, before he grew melancholy and died, not having patience, Hill wrote, to await the issue of the law-suit that was to relieve the difficulties of the whole family.³¹ Perhaps he was wise.

Hill's only son proved another source of acute anxiety. His "juvenile weaknesses" were causing so much concern in April, 1741, that his father feared him incapable of "the solid, or serious, Turn of Mind; whether in Learning, or Business."³² There are dark hints of the nature of his performances in a letter of July 29, of that year: "I fear, vain, application to prevent the ruin of a youth, who being born without an aptitude to think, was destined to be led away by every Light Temptation; and who, in undesigned, and unfelt, Contradiction to the bias of a weak good Nature, takes hardly any steps, but such as tend the shortest and dirtiest way to a Waste and Infamy. Imagine for us, from this general Hint of an Affliction that has many branches." In reply to Richardson's hesitating inquiry, five years later, after a "young too near male relation," Hill writes that, though he does not see him for many months together, he hears of him too many ways, and unhappily almost every way. He has gone through a considerable fortune, weakly left to his early management by "an unthinking grandmother," and is living dissolutely

²⁹ Thomson to Hill, June 11, 1726. *Col. of 1751.*

³⁰ September 27, 1739.

³¹ July 10, 1746.

³² Letter of April 13.

in London; Hill tries to hope that he is not without an inclination to a "slow irresolute repentance."³³

All these misfortunes from climate, law-suits, and undesirable relations, might well have robbed Hill of any spirit for literature. Yet, during the dozen years at Plaistow, he wrote *The Fanciad*, *The Impartial*, *The Religion of Reason*, *The Art of Acting*, *Merope*, tracts on war and on agriculture (unpublished), and some versions of the odes of Horace;³⁴ he also prepared *Gideon* for the press, three books being published with elaborate notes; and he planned another enterprise that connects him once more with Mallet's career.

The Duchess of Marlborough, who died in October, 1744, bequeathed a thousand pounds to Mallet and Glover, if they would undertake a biography of the great Duke. Glover declined, but Mallet accepted. Now a life of the Duke was one of Hill's projects. His *Fanciad*, published in May, 1743, was written to stir up the Marlborough family to a realization of the need of an adequate biography;³⁵ and it might well have stirred them somewhat, if they had read it.³⁶ He rather expected it to fall somehow

³³ October 25, 1746.

³⁴ To be printed in the *Daily Gazetteer*, with which Richardson had some connection till shortly before June, 1746; a letter from Hill of June 13 comments on Richardson's reasons for dropping it.

³⁵ Hill to Richardson, April 2, 1743. *Corres.*, I, 89.

³⁶ The scene opens in the library of the present Duke, who is startled first by the apparition of the great general, who discusses the foreign situation, and then by the Fury Faction, who proclaims from innumerable tongues the troubles at home. From the Fury he is snatched up into the chariot of Fancy, where he finds Truth, forced to borrow charms from Fancy in an age so indifferent to her unadorned perfection. The chariot conveys them to the genius of Britain, who arises from the sea to tell them, among other things, how Marlborough, while conversing with Michael in heaven on war-like themes, with Caesar as an attentive listener, heard of certain designs of France against England, and promptly frustrated them

into their hands, though he would not send it himself, lest his motive might appear interested.³⁷ Richardson hastened to assure him that his was the hand fittest for the historian's task.³⁸ This Hill denied; but he disclosed a plan to write an essay covering the events of one year (that of the Blenheim campaign), just to prove the inadequacy of previous histories, and to suggest how much better still the work could be done with the aid of the private family memoirs.³⁹ Then Richardson reported⁴⁰ that the Duchess was said to be at work digesting these papers with the assistance of Mr. Hooke; but through the booksellers he presently learned that the Duchess was less busy than he supposed.⁴¹

In June, Hill sent the *Fanciad* to Mallet, in response to an inquiry how he was spending his leisure, and asked him to find out, if possible, from the Duchess, whether there was material enough for a life. "Don't imagine me so vain to think myself half qualified for such a task as the Duke's history. I did but wish to see some willing undertaker equal to it."⁴² The letter arranges for a meeting the next Tuesday at St. Paul's Coffee House. The result of by despatching a wily spirit to lure Fleury's thoughts to trade; as interest in trade meant decline in martial vigor, England was spared a dangerous war. After throwing a new light on history by this masterpiece of explanation, the Genius sheds three tears, sighs three times, and sinks into the sea. Fancy follows unexpectedly, nearly drowning her passengers, but Truth snatches the reins just in time and drives the young duke home. In a final exhortation, she points out to him his duty of seeing that his noble ancestor is placed in a proper light before the world—unless the task is made unnecessary by the Duchess, so conspicuous for her noble taste of glory.

³⁷ Hill to Richardson, April 2, 1743. *Corres.*, I.

³⁸ Richardson to Hill, April 2, 1743.

³⁹ Hill to Richardson, April 5, 1743. *Corres.*, I, 93.

⁴⁰ April 7, 1743.

⁴¹ Hill to Richardson, April 25, 1743.

⁴² Hill to Mallet, June 2, 1743. *Works*, II, 229.

the meeting can be partly conjectured from what happened later. Probably Mallet did become interested in Hill's idea. By October 20, he had some new engagement, about which Hill was very curious; it may or may not have been connected with the Duke's life. Hill himself was at work upon another poem by the following spring. But in December, 1744, he wrote a "long and curious" letter to Mallet on the provision in the Duchess's will.⁴³ Mallet made no satisfactory reply; and Hill talked the matter over with Richardson: "By your mentioning the visit from our Strand Green Friend [Mallet], you just put me on remembering to ask you, whether he proceeds upon the Marlboro' History? I hope he don't. For tho' he was the person whom I aim'd to hint to the old Duchess, in the *Fanciad*, yet I make no Scruple to confess, I looked upon the poor consideration she assigned him for it, and her odd and half contemptuous method of expressing that assignment, as so unequal, to all the Genius, Labour, Skill, and many years' Attention, due to such a Work, if rightly executed, that I used the strongest Arguments I could produce, with purpose to dissuade him; . . . and he promised me his weighed and future Sentiments upon this Subject. But continues silent on it. . . . I am afraid he lets himself be tempted—tho' the Lady was a little past enchantment, and her Apple was both Crabb and Windfall."⁴⁴ Richardson replied that Mallet was going on, and had made great progress; he expected his reward in the work itself—an unusually disinterested point of view for Mallet!⁴⁵ In the letters, chiefly of gossip and compliment, between Mallet and Hill during the years 1746 to 1749—the two families were evidently on pleasant calling terms,—Hill usually refers to his friend as the Duke's historian, and once ex-

⁴³ Hist. MS. Comm., Appendix to 9th Report, 476.

⁴⁴ October 25, 1746.

⁴⁵ October 29, 1746.

presses his longing to see a Marlborough's face in the glass Mallet is silvering for it.⁴⁶ But neither Hill nor anyone else ever saw it.

In practically all of Hill's work published after 1736, Richardson was concerned as printer. But no printer not also a friend and a very generous one would have conferred so many favors as he did. The nature of these obligations is suggested in the following acknowledgment from Hill:⁴⁷ "What you have done, in relation to the bills and the advertisements [of *Alzira*], at once obliges and confounds me—I mean the Gracefulness and Generosity of your Spirit, in the Intention.—For I do, and must, consider myself as still undischarged, in that particular, and only more your debtor from the disposition you have shown to remit the obligation." Another letter⁴⁸ acknowledges the receipt of a hundred pounds, sent in a "surprisingly" obliging manner, and other instances might be quoted. In addition to these services, Richardson gave advice about dedications, titles, favorable times for publication, and the like.⁴⁹ Only twice did anything threaten interruption of these amicable relations. Once, when slightly ruffled by a comment of Hill's upon *Clarissa*, Richardson writes with elaborate politeness that if any other printer (Watts or Draper, for instance) has offered to publish either of Hill's charming dramatic pieces, no generous intentions to himself must stand in the way. Hill's reply betrays perplexity, as neither Watts nor Draper had expressed any desire to print his plays.⁵⁰ The misunderstanding finally passed off, without the interposition of any other printer.

⁴⁶ Hill to Mallet, July 28, 1748. *Works*, II, 334.

⁴⁷ July 5, 1736.

⁴⁸ November, 1746. *Corres.*, I, 118.

⁴⁹ His remonstrances induced Hill to alter the extraordinary title *Go to Bed, Tom, to The Fanciad*.

⁵⁰ Richardson to Hill, January 5, 1747, and Hill's reply January 23.

Again, Richardson, hard-pressed by his work for the House of Commons, turned *Gideon* over to another press; and Hill, hearing nothing for some time either of his poem or of his friend, writes that he is mortified to find Richardson so inattentive to *Gideon*.⁵¹ Richardson in his reply next day refers feelingly to the business that has kept him at work from five in the morning to eleven at night; if *Gideon* goes on slowly, *Clarissa*, out of print for two months, does not go on at all.

Hill did not depend entirely on the outcome of his law-suit for the means to discharge his obligations to Richardson. As far back as December 23, 1739, he planned to assign to him a collection of old and new pieces, but was deterred by the very just fear that they would prove "chargeable children." "I therefore think," he writes,⁵² "that I ought not only to offer it to you as a present, which I heartily wish might be worth your acceptance; but, in order to render it more certainly such, to be myself at the charge of your printing and publishing it." It was a discouragement to the scheme of a collection that the separate poems made so little headway.⁵³ In 1748, Hill was still engaged in transcribing and retranscribing his works, and worrying over his indebtedness to Richardson.⁵⁴ Not that Richardson asked repayment: "You are so very earnest," he wrote in 1748, "about transferring to me the copyright to all your works, that I will only say, that that point must be left to the future issues of things. But I will keep account. . . . It is therefore time enough to think of the blank receipt you have had the goodness to send me

⁵¹ May 9, 1749. Richardson printed the *Journals of the House*.

⁵² January 8, 1740. *Corres.*, I, 37.

⁵³ From a letter from Richardson of July 1, 1746, we learn that the collection was to consist of two volumes of poetry, and two entitled *Vocal Shades*,—original letters, mixed with a few *Prompters*.

⁵⁴ Hill to Richardson, May 5, 1748.

to fill up.''⁵⁵ When in January, 1749, Mallet secured from Millar the publisher a proposal for printing *Merope*, Hill was loth to accept it, because it involved the copyright that he always considered Richardson's. Richardson appeared willing to forego that advantage,—in fact, he had been partly instrumental in persuading Millar to make the offer; for Millar had a large business and the means of promoting the sale of what he engaged in. As to copyright, "You must excuse me, Sir, but I cannot upon any Account, think of accepting of your generous present of that Kind."⁵⁶ It is interesting that Richardson planned to return Hill's favor by bequeathing his own writings to his "friendly care and judgment."⁵⁷

Hill never really lost faith that his works would in the end be accepted by the public, and prove profitable to someone—preferably Richardson. Yet the successive shocks administered by a callous public during these years gradually forced him into that last refuge of the unsuccessful author,—contempt of his age. Richardson tried to blame the cold reception of *The Religion of Reason* (1746) on the popular absorption in political events. But it is unnecessary to look beyond the poem itself—by no means devoid of merit—for an explanation of the public indifference. Interest in deistic ideas had been declining since Tindal's death; and deism in blank verse,—belated echoes of the attacks on a monopoly of revelation, on the pride and stubbornness of the favored Jews, on the fanaticism that left the negroes or the Chinese or the Hindus out of the scheme of salvation,—could scarcely arrest attention.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ October 27, 1748. *Corres.*, I, 119.

⁵⁶ Richardson to Hill, January 12, 1749.

⁵⁷ Richardson to Hill, July 24, 1744. *Corres.*, I, 102.

⁵⁸ That Hill had some sympathy with deism is quite natural; it took in all races and all worlds; and to Hill narrow and confined ideas in religion would be as repugnant as in trade. There are

Hill, however, caught at the friendly explanation: "If it proves otherwise, I must either have no power of thinking at all, or must think of this age very despicably."⁵⁹

Perhaps Richardson grew tired of hearing censure of the age that approved of him; for he gently hinted to Hill at last that genius must try to accommodate itself to the time it lives in, "since works published in this age must take root in it to flourish in the next." The taste of the world, he goes on, has altered since Hill withdrew from it; "your writings require thought to read . . . and the world has no thought to bestow." It wants simplicity; it does not want to dig for jewels in a mine. "Your sentiments, even they will have it who allow them to be noble, are too munificently adorned. . . . And yet, for my own part, I am convinced that the fault lies in that indolent . . . world."⁶⁰ Hill took the friendly plainness of the letter well, but did not back down from his position. He knew his writings were unpopular—he always expected them to be so; "nor shall I live to see them in another light. But there will rise a time in which they will be seen in a far different one; I know it, on a surer hope than that of vanity." As for simplicity—no one loves simplicity more than he; but he is apparently the only one who understands good lines in the poem, and fewer absurdities than usual; for example:

"This dim ball

That day by day rolls round its eyeless bulk."

"Where the broad sea, scarce heard, rolls murmuring in."

"Turn thy sight eastward, o'er the time-hushed plains,
Now graves of vanished empire."

Hill concludes by deciding to doubt all faiths, "undoubting God," until

"Death opening Truth's barred gate, 'tis time to see
God's meanings, in the light his presence lends."

⁵⁹ September 15, 1746.

⁶⁰ October 27, 1748. *Corres.*, I, 119.

its true meaning, and Richardson the only one who exemplifies it in the present age. The "dim humble wretches" who cry about it mean "the unjogging slide of something . . . that paces their lame understanding smoothly on, and does not shake it out of a composure necessary to its weakness." Simplicity is merely a weaker word for propriety; "everything is simple, that has nothing added contrary to its own quality; and everything unsimple, that has foreign and unnatural annexions. If a camel were to be described, it might be done with all the requisite simplicity, however loftily the poet should express the beast's raised neck, majestic pace, and venerable countenance. But from the moment he began to mention claws and courage, as the camel's attributes, his deviation from the rules of true simplicity would justly call for the reproach of too magnificently adorned; not because camels ought not to be spoken of magnificently, but because there should not be assigned them a magnificence repugnant to their nature."⁶¹ All quite true; but so far as it applies to Hill, the difficulty is not that he supplies his camels with claws—it is his astonishing way of picturing their humps.⁶²

Richardson had no reason for despising an age in which his own writings were taking root, and Hill could not deny that the age showed good taste in appreciating work of which he approved enthusiastically. Richardson's novels provide the most cheerful and entertaining topic in the correspondence.

On December 8, 1740, Richardson, without declaring himself the author, sent the two volumes of *Pamela* to beguile the young ladies at Plaistow in a tedious winter

⁶¹ November 2, 1748. *Corres.*, I, 124.

⁶² Even in a literal sense: see *Gideon*, book II, stanza 21—

"Next, loaded high, the bunchy camels go,
Stepping, with straight raised neck, sublimely slow."

hour.⁶³ "The book was published many months before I saw or heard of it," wrote Hill to Mallet, assuring him that he had no share in the authorship of "that delightful nursery of virtues," "and when he sent it me . . . it came without the smallest hint that it was his, and with a grave apology, as for a trifle of too light a species. I found out whose it was, by the resembling turn of Pamela's expressions, weighed with some which I had noted as peculiar in his letters. Yet very loth he was a long time to confess it." He adds—and he was a true prophet for once—"I am much mistaken in the promise of his genius, or *Pamela* . . . is but the dawning of the day he is to give us."⁶⁴ With Richardson Hill at first pretended ignorance, and urged him to name the author of the "powerful little piece," in a fervid letter included among the "greasy compliments" later printed in the introduction to the second edition of *Pamela*.⁶⁵ Richardson was, in fact, very much delighted with the unqualified approbation of the Hill family. How could he name the author after such praise? He was more effusive than he quite approved later, when, in going over the copies of his letters, he scratched out some expressions relating to Hill's godlike mind and matchless genius.⁶⁶

Hill's reply overflowed with enthusiasm.⁶⁷ Part of it contains a new and very insinuating form of flattery, describing the effect of *Pamela* on a six-year-old child in the family—"a pretty, gentle, gay-spirited" boy, a poor soldier's son, whom the Hills seem to have adopted. "The

⁶³ *Pamela* was published in November.

⁶⁴ January 23, 1741. *Works*, II, 158.

⁶⁵ December 17, 1740. *Corres.*, I, 53. The characterization of this and other compliments was made by one of Richardson's critics (February 7, 1741. Forster MSS. Folio XVI).

⁶⁶ Richardson to Hill, December 22, 1740.

⁶⁷ Richardson himself endorsed it "too high praise" It is dated December 29. The letter of the same date in the *Correspondence* (I, 55) is probably the concluding portion of that in the Forster MSS.

wanton rogue is half air, and every motion he acts by has a spring like your Pamela's, when she threw down the card-table." This "tom-tit of a prater" happened to be present when Hill was reading aloud Pamela's reflections at the pond, upon the wisdom of suicide: "The little rampant intruder, being kept out by the extent of the circle, had crept under my chair, and was sitting before me on the carpet, with his head almost touching the book, and his face bowing down towards the fire. He had sat for some time in this posture, with a stillness that made us conclude him asleep; when on a sudden we heard a succession of heart-heaving sobs. . . . I turned his innocent face to look towards me, but his eyes were quite lost in his tears; which running down from his cheeks in free currents had formed two sincere little fountains on that part of the carpet he hung over. All the ladies in company were ready to devour him with kisses, and he has since become doubly a favorite; and is, perhaps, the youngest of Pamela's converts."⁶⁸

The "too high praise" and the tale of Harry's sensibility brought from Richardson an epigram for Hill and a book of fables for the boy.⁶⁹ Hill tells how he laid aside the

⁶⁸ Sensibility was profitable then. "Mrs. Belfour" (*Correspondence*, IV, 305) tells Richardson how a lady read aloud to her intimate friends from volume VII of *Clarissa*, while her maid dressed her hair; but the maid showered tears so plentifully over her mistress that reading and curling had to be discontinued; and the lady was so pleased with the sensibility of the maid that she encouraged it by the gift of a crown.

⁶⁹ See letter from Hill, December, 1740, *Corres.*, I, 59. This is the epigram:

"When noble thoughts with language pure unite,
To give to kindred excellency its right;
Tho' unencumbered with the clogs of rhyme,
Where tinkling sounds for want of meaning chime;
Which, like the rocks in Shannon's midway course,
Divide the sense and interrupt its force;
Well we may judge so strong and clear a rill
Flows hither from the Muses' sacred Hill."

fables while he read the letter: "The busy pirate . . . fell to lifting the leaves one by one, and peeping between them with the archness and fear of a monkey; and I left him . . . unobserved to the enjoyment of his cautious discoveries, till I came to that paragraph in your letter where you call him the dear amiable boy, which I purposely read out aloud. At those words, up flashed all the fire of his eyes, with a mixture of alarm and attention; and just then one of my daughters happening to say: 'Now am I sure that this good-natured and generous Mr. Richardson has sent those two books for little Harry.'—'See here,' added the other, 'what it is to be praised for a boy that is wise and loves reading.' " Harry's ecstasy was unbounded. "His fairy face (ears and all) was flushed as red as his lips; and his flying feet told his joy to the floor, in a wild and stamping impatience of gratitude. At last he shot himself, in acknowledgment, upon me, with a force like a bullet; and . . . fell to kissing me for a minute or two together." Harry "wanted art to explain his conceptions"; one would sometimes rather have his stamping raptures than Hill's more artful ecstasies.⁷⁰

There is scarcely any diminution in Hill's raptures during the whole of the year 1741.⁷¹ Mr. Richardson is his

⁷⁰ There are occasional later glimpses of the "little Campbell," one under "the umbrage of a pair of out-strutting hoops." He remained one of Richardson's admirers, and developed some wit and much honesty, though he was not so good as his first shoot promised. Perhaps his sensibility decreased. He was one of the witnesses to Richardson's will.

⁷¹ Mrs. Jewkes kept Hill awake nights, "till the Ghost of Lady Davers, drawing open the Curtain, scares the Scarer of me and of Pamela" (January 15). Cf. the effect of Hill's *Art of Acting* on Richardson: "My whole frame, so nervously affected before, was shaken by it. I found such Tremors, such Startings, that I was unable to go through it," until fortified by the oak-tincture (October 29, 1746).

“dearest, wisest, most virtuous, and never enough to be loved” friend; and he Richardson’s “troublesome but inexpressibly devoted” one. He offers to deal with any objections which Richardson’s modesty prevents his answering, and he asks for the foundation of the story. The letter Richardson wrote in reply—very important for his biography, though less so for Hill’s—describes the originals of *Pamela* and Mr. B., and the inception of the volume of familiar letters which grew into *Pamela*.⁷² The whole family visited Richardson at Salisbury Court in July—the girls apparently meeting him for the first time; for when they were meditating the visit, Hill threatened to send their true pictures before them, that Richardson “might expect to see nothing extraordinary; and one of the baggages answered me that the most extraordinary thing I could send would be the pictures of women drawn truly.”⁷³ In October, the young ladies were in Surrey, “preaching *Pamela* and *Pamela*’s author with true apostolical attachment.”

With one persistent request of Richardson’s—to “render *Pamela* more worthy” of their approbation by correcting her—no one in the family was disposed to comply. He sent the girls an interleaved copy of the book for this purpose,⁷⁴ but they filled the sheets with “progressive memorandums of the Benefits her conversation brought them.”⁷⁵ As Richardson continued to insist “kindly and warmly” on corrections, Hill sent a few verbal suggestions, after going through the book once with the eye and the heart of a cynic, and again with the vigilance of friendship.⁷⁶ Later, he “improved” some passages by the addition of a

⁷² *Corres.*, I, lxix f.

⁷³ Hill to Richardson, April 21, 1741. *Corres.*, I, 70.

⁷⁴ December 22, 1740.

⁷⁵ December 30, 1740.

⁷⁶ April 13, 1741.

“slightly poetic turn.”⁷⁷ One objection of an anonymous writer had a little weight, in his opinion,—“that, which advises some little Contraction of the Prayers and Appeals to the Deity. I say little Contraction: for they are nobly and sincerely Pathetic. And I say it only in Fear, lest, if fancied too long by the fashionably Averse to the Subject, Minds which most want the purposed Impression, might hazard the Loss of its Benefits, by passing over those pious Reflexions, which, if shorter, would catch their Attention.”⁷⁸ He himself cautiously suggests that *Pamela*, in writing to her parents, might sometimes refer to Mr. B. as “beloved,” instead of always “best-beloved”; for there is a little harshness in this marked preference of the conjugal to the filial affection.⁷⁹ But these trifling criticisms only show how little *Pamela* needs alteration: “I would not scratch such a beautiful Face for the Indies.”⁸⁰

Hill was, if possible, more enthusiastic over the continuation of *Pamela* than over the first part. After rehearsing the least that could be said of its merits (which included boundless invention, bold and vast reflection, sharp and generous satire, and the like), and declaring that he “never could endure a lukewarm approbation,” he expresses a desire to have the “sweet charmer’s life” lengthened to a fifth and even a sixth volume: “Do oblige mankind with this Concession. Nothing ever equall’d what you write: and, tho’ you were to give the World as many Volumes doubled as the Six I pray for, not a Reader would complain, but at the end of the last Paragraph.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ December 15, 1741.

⁷⁸ January 6, 1741.

⁷⁹ February 25, 1742.

⁸⁰ January 6, 1741.

⁸¹ October 22, 1741. To the present-day reader, this request sounds monstrous. But there were admirers of Richardson—and people of sense, too,—who read every one of his volumes through once a year.

In his next novel, Richardson did his best to satisfy this thirst for many volumes. The progress of *Clarissa Harlowe* is very fully reported in the correspondence. It was far from being, like *Pamela*, a two-months' labor; and to follow its development through the many closely written pages of the letters of four years is to gain an indelible impression of the seriousness and extent of the undertaking.

The first news of *Pamela*'s successor—welcome after dismal talk of the ill-success of *The Fanciad* and *The Impartial*—is Hill's acknowledgment of the receipt of the “good and beautiful design” of a new attempt; “you must give me leave to be astonished,” he writes, “when you tell me you have finished it already!”⁸² This evidently did not mean that it was ready for publication. With the first instalments of the new novel (sent in November, 1744) came the author's usual request that Hill do some pruning; he replied that he could not think of it. Again, a few weeks later, he sees no “modest possibility of doing it,” for—and his reason is good—“you have formed a style, as much your property as our respect for what you write is, where verbosity becomes a virtue; because, in pictures which you draw with such a skilful negligence, redundancy but conveys resemblance; and to contract the strokes would be to spoil the likeness.”⁸³ With four MS. volumes of *Clarissa* in his hands, Hill is “beyond expression, impatient to attend her Elopement to her Lover,”—an impatience in which he has the modern reader's sympathy.⁸⁴

By March, Richardson is already much disturbed by the length of his masterpiece; and so are his friends. Hill, Thomas Edwards, of *The Canons of Criticism*, was one; and he wept over the 7th volume of *Clarissa* as much in 1755 as he had in 1748 (*Corres.*, III, 111).

⁸² July 24, 1744. *Corres.*, I, 101.

⁸³ January 7, 1745. *Corres.*, I, 99.

⁸⁴ February 28, 1745.

however, refuses to join in the remonstrances made by “the erring Diligence” of his “curtailing Friends.” He begins to waver a little a month later, when he realizes that five books give admission only to the hall of the delightful building; yet Nature is lovely, though she lead us over “boundless wilds.”⁸⁵ Even at the end of the year, he will not admit that the “still growing as well as lengthening Beauty” is too tall; but, he adds, “if there is any Place, that *can* be shortened, without maiming this delightful Composition, *You*, who have created it, and have it’s whole Proportion and Connexion in your Eye, at once, are better justified in doing it” than anyone else; “it is in the *first* stages (if at all) that you must look for lopping Places. All your after-growths are sacred, to the smallest Twig.”⁸⁶ As Richardson kept on sending his manuscript and asking advice, Hill was forced to keep on explaining why he did not want the task of criticism.⁸⁷ In the effort to reassure Richardson, he takes refuge in some curious reasoning: “Your very full and striking Title Page informs us for what kind of Readers, chiefly, you adapt the use, of your instructive Story.—If you had designed a Piece, for the Severe, the Pensive, and the Practised, you would certainly have acted right in cutting off whatever might seem *spread too broad*, or too remote from the main point intended. But you are here, endeavoring to fix the Mercury of Light, and inattentive Volatiles.”⁸⁸ A method not well adapted to the end, one would imagine; but Hill thinks the Volatiles like to hear of what resembles them, and Richardson must mix his instructions with what they like.

This settled the matter for a time. But it came up again in the fall of 1746, and unfortunately found Hill less

⁸⁵ April 4, 1745.

⁸⁶ Letter dated “end of 1745.”

⁸⁷ January 30, 1746.

⁸⁸ February 6, 1746.

obdurate. Richardson was then planning to abridge some letters, and Hill suggests "cautiously retrenching Repetitions of the same Events" by throwing in "Notes, in places where it can be narratively done, without diminishing a fine Effect that rises very often . . . from different views and principles of Persons to whom the same Fact is related."⁸⁹ This advice was general enough to be harmless. But he added some dangerously detailed comments on the characters of Lovelace and Clarissa—too detailed to be quoted at length. The gist of his criticism is that the lady ought to be really in love with Lovelace before the duel, and that he should be more generous in dealing with her brother—an impressive genteel compliment or two would not be amiss; such conduct would inspire Clarissa with confidence and put a better face on her desertion. Richardson was so agitated by this letter that he turned it over to a friend, whose comments, arranged under five heads, he carefully copied out and attached to Hill's letter. The obliging friend found the observations mistaken, even though dictated by the brain of so sublime a genius as Hill: for Richardson's Lovelace, delighting in cruelty and in the tears of distressed beauty, they would substitute a Lovelace actuated by generosity and true love. And Clarissa in love—horrible! "Alas! this Gentleman may have true Ideas of Common Life, but not of that exalted Spirit, which urges its Votaries to ascend the steep Summit of Perfection." In short, Hill has suggested a new Clarissa as well as a new Lovelace,—a confiding and unsuspecting one, "such a one as might easily be adopted by any giddy wench that ever ran away with her father's footman." It is fortunate that Hill did not see this arraignment of his delicacy.

⁸⁹ October 23, 1746.

Richardson's next letter contained an elaborate exposition of his conception of his characters. Clarissa must not avow, even to herself, a passion whose object is unworthy; she must subdue it; she must be so faultless that readers in doubt of a future life will realize that only a heavenly reward could justify her sufferings on earth. Lovelace is meant to be as unamiable as possible: "I once read to a young Lady Part of his Character, and then his end; and upon her pitying him, and wishing he had been rather made a Penitent, than to be killed, I made him more and more odious, by his heightened Arrogance and Triumph, as well as by his vile actions, leaving only some qualities in him laudable enough to justify her first liking." Poor Richardson was now in serious difficulties on the vital question of abridgment, not only with Hill, but with several other friends. A certain doctor advises him not to cut out any sentiments, but to follow the plan of the above-weight Newmarket jockeys—sweat away what he takes out; Mr. Cibber wants whole branches cut off—"some of which, however, he dislikes not"; but these are just the branches Young would keep; and the doctor's wife, "a Woman of fine Sense," begs not to be robbed of any of her Acquaintance. Though he has carried out Hill's suggestion about the narrative notes, Richardson still finds the book "a vast deal too long"; and begs again for help.⁹⁰

Hill, declaring himself satisfied with the analysis of the two leading characters, retired to the comparatively safe ground of the title, which he thinks should be adequate to Richardson's "unboundedness of Comprehension in the Subject." The title he suggests is adequate enough for anything:

⁹⁰ October 29, 1746. One of Richardson's objects—displaying an unusually enlightened point of view—was "to expose that pernicious notion that a reformed rake . . . makes the best husband."

“The Lady’s Legacy:
or
The whole gay and serious Compass of the Human
Heart laid open,
For the service of both sexes.
In the History of the Life and Ruin of
a lately Celebrated Beauty
Miss Clarissa Harlowe.
Including
Great Variety of other Lives and Characters
Occasionally interested in the Moving Story.
Detecting and exposing
The most secret Arts and Subtest Præctices
of
That endangering Species of Triumphant Rakes
call’d
Women’s Men.

Assisted by corrupt and vicious Engines of the Sex they plot against.
Published in compliance with the Lady’s order on her death-bed,
as a Warning to unguarded, vain, or credulous Innocence.”

The alternative title—for Hill was equal to more than one
—is worse:

“The Lady’s Remembrance:
or
The Way of a Young Man with a Maid.
Being the whole,” and so on as before.

Hill thought this full enough without reference to the
parents; but it really seems a little harsh to discriminate
against them in so roomy a title.⁹¹

A short time after this achievement, Hill offered to try
the Newmarket jockey method of contraction on a few
letters. If the experiment does no other good, he declares,
it may at least cure Richardson of his desire for curtail-

⁹¹ November 5, 1746. Richardson thought the title too long (January 5, 1747).

ment.⁹² Hill has been accused of tactlessness in making the attempt,⁹³ but it is hard to see what else he could have done, when Richardson's persistent appeals for help continued after Hill had exhausted all his excuses for refusing. And the experiment did accomplish the cure Hill anticipated; in addition, it unfortunately created a temporary coolness in their friendship. When *The New Clarissa* arrived in December from Plaistow, Richardson was amazed.⁹⁴ By his computations, Hill's alterations in the eight or nine letters he had worked over would cut off about two-thirds, and reduce the whole to three volumes. This was too drastic—his purpose could scarcely be answered in so small a compass, "without taking from it those simple, tho' diffuse Parts, which some like, and have (however unduly) complimented me upon, as making a new species of writing." He is clearly quite miserable over the matter. One shocked little comment is hidden away in the margin of a page of *The New Clarissa* in the Forster MSS. Hill had put the exclamation "by Heaven" in the mouth of Arabella Harlowe: "To what *regiment of guards*," writes Richardson, "could this lady belong?" He assured Hill, however, that as a model his efforts would be of great service, and asked him to proceed farther in the volume and write a preface, as well.

Hill could only exclaim in despair, "I knew . . . (and have told you so with a sincerity becoming the Affection I ever did, and ever must, bear you) that your Genius was as new as extensive; and that you constituted a new Species, by your peculiarly natural Manner of Writing.—I told you, too, that I judged it an impossibility, to shorten . . . without cutting off a Luxuriancy of beauties. And now, you have had an Example and Proof that everything I said

⁹² November 20, 1746.

⁹³ C. L. Thomson: *Samuel Richardson*, 42.

⁹⁴ January 5, 1747.

to you was true. And that wherever a Genius so peculiar as yours is, overruns the Space it allots itself, it is only the same Genius, that can, fitly, reduce it.” Since Richardson is unwilling to leave out the “lively Simplicities” that must be sacrificed if there is to be any reduction, he has destroyed his attempts at further alteration. Suppose one unreduced volume is tried on the public; if they accept it, the rest can be printed without contraction.⁹⁵

Richardson might have been appeased, if Hill had not gone on to reaffirm his views of Lovelace and Clarissa. He had seized the opportunity in his version to make Lovelace more of a gentleman—a more delicate thinker; to picture him so very black a villain would be to destroy the moral: what young woman would suppose *her* lover so base? It is a question whether the addition of Hillian delicacy of thought would not have made Lovelace a more impossible combination of qualities than critics usually agree he now is. But Richardson’s reply proved there was no hope of his improvement: “I am a good deal warped by the character of a Gentleman I had in my Eye, when I drew both him, and Mr. B. in *Pamela*. The best of that gentleman for the latter; the worst of him for Lovelace, made still worse by mingling the worst of two other Characters, that were as well known to me, of that Gentleman’s Acquaintance.”⁹⁶ At least, Hill may be given credit for recognizing certain weaknesses in the conception of Lovelace, and for standing by his opinion. Most of Richardson’s correspondents were incapable of that much independence of thought in relation to his works.

It was Clarissa, however, who nearly broke off the friendship. “No inducement, weaker than resistless Love,”

⁹⁵ January 23, 1747.

⁹⁶ January 26, 1747. The gentleman who sat for these portraits of Lovelace and Mr. B. is sometimes identified as Philip, Duke of Wharton.

wrote Hill, "will justify Clarissa's rash elopement with a man." She could have refused her consent at the altar; and she had less to fear from her father's indignation at her rejection of the wretch he proposed to her than from "running away from his House, with a worse, if possible, of her own choosing."⁹⁷ This harsh characterization of the divine Clarissa's flight was more than Richardson could stand. He was greatly mortified that her act "should be called by such a clear discerner: a rash Elopfement with a Man." He had tried to make it manifest that, though provoked in every way and even brought to promise to go off, she had met Lovelace only to refuse. "I am very unfortunate, good Sir, . . . to be so ill understood, to have given Reason, I should say, to be so little understood." To confront Hill, he brings up the testimony of two very delicate minds of the "sex," who owned "they should not, in her Case, have been able, however reluctant, to avoid being carried off."⁹⁸

Hill's conciliatory reply brought no answer, and he began to fear, after writing once more, that he might have been misunderstood. He reminded his friend that the office of "contractor" was undertaken at Richardson's request; that his advice was asked; and he thought it his duty to point out in a frank and friendly manner the few places where there was room for criticism. He stubbornly reiterated, however, that Clarissa should be betrayed into meeting Lovelace.⁹⁹

In the absence of any letters until the following Novem-

⁹⁷ This comment resembles in brutal frankness that of Lady M. W. Montagu on Clarissa: "Any girl that runs away with a young fellow, without intending to marry him, should be carried to Bridewell or to Bedlam the next day" (*Letters and Works*, ed. W. Moy Thomas, II, 232).

⁹⁸ January 26, 1747.

⁹⁹ Hill to Richardson, January 28 and February 9, 1747.

ber, it must be supposed that Richardson was not mollified. When the correspondence was reopened—apparently by Hill,—the dangerous subject was dropped altogether. Hill politely inquired what his friend meant to do with the divine Clarissa. Heaven forbid that he should leave publication to his executors. Richardson responded by sending the first printed volumes, and thus throwing the whole family into raptures.¹⁰⁰ For *Clarissa*, henceforth, Hill has only praise, and that varied and fluent to the limit of his vocabulary; and beyond that limit, he takes refuge in silent amazement: “You are—in short, I cannot tell what you are. I only know, I feel it!”¹⁰¹

Richardson’s sufferings were now caused by other friends, who wished the novel to end happily. With the present of the sixth and seventh volumes, he writes: “These will show you, Sir, that I intend more than a Novel or Romance by this Piece; and that it is of the tragic kind. In short, that I thought my principal characters could not be rewarded by any happiness short of the heavenly. But how have I suffered by this from the cavils of some, from the Prayers of others, from the entreaties of many more, to make what is called a happy ending. Mr. Lyttleton, the late Mr. Thomson, Mr. Cibber, and Mr. Fielding have been among these.”¹⁰² Hill did not swell the chorus. Nor did his daughters make any rash effort at compliance, when Richardson, undeterred by former experiences, asked them to point out any lack of delicacy or female grace in Clarissa or Miss Howe; he would not have even Miss Howe, in the height of her vivacity, indelicate.¹⁰³ The father of the young ladies replied for them: to hint that Clarissa lacked delicacy! “who alone could reinspire it through an *unsexed*

¹⁰⁰ Hill to Richardson, November 3 and November 26, 1747.

¹⁰¹ May 5, 1748.

¹⁰² November 7, 1748.

¹⁰³ November 18, 1748.

world!”¹⁰⁴ The family were hoping at this time soon to have the noble pleasure of attending the divine Clarissa to her “heavenly Period”; and on November 29, Hill “buried the dear girl” at three o’clock in the morning—after she had cost him tears enough to swim the volumes that excited them. “At this moment,” he wrote, “I have three girls around me—Each a Separate Volume in her hand, and all their Eyes like a wet flower in April!”¹⁰⁵

When the Misses Hill had dried their eyes, they wrote to ask Richardson if there ever really were such “masked male Savages as Lovelace,” and to compare the author’s gradations to those of Nature from season to season: “You raised your Pamela from very humbly sweet, to very nobly elevated. And now, beginning with Clarissa where you left your other charmer, you have found a more than mortal Power to raise her also with a gradual Exaltation.”¹⁰⁶ Richardson was more pleased with Astraea and Minerva than he had recently been with their father. Can they believe, he asks, that many of their sex pity Lovelace and call Clarissa hard-hearted? Presently he is begging them to indicate his faults—their praise is making him vain: “From whom can I, in Matters of Delicacy, expect Detection and Correction, if not from Ladies who have the Happiness of so dear and near a Relation to Mr. Hill?”¹⁰⁷

The delicacy of the young ladies was notable when it approved of *Clarissa*; for less obvious when it saw good in *Tom Jones*. Richardson’s attitude towards his rival novelist, who had insulted him far more by achieving popu-

¹⁰⁴ November 25, 1748.

¹⁰⁵ They were more sociable than the Highmore family, who retired each to a separate apartment to read and weep at ease (*Corres.*, I, exi).

¹⁰⁶ December 13, 1748.

¹⁰⁷ Letters from Richardson, December 14, 1748, and January 6, 1749.

larity with a *Tom Jones* than by making his "lewd and ungenerous engraftment" upon *Pamela*, is distinctly petty and spiteful. The two men were temperamentally at opposite poles. Nor was it to the credit of most of Richardson's correspondents that they humored him in his jealousy. The Hill girls, for all their delicacy, proved to be exceptions. "Dear Sir," wrote Richardson, July 12, 1749, "have you read *Tom Jones*? . . . I have found neither Leisure nor Inclination, yet, to read that Piece, and the less inclination as several good judges of my acquaintance condemn it and the general taste together. I could wish to know the Sentiments of your ladies upon it. If favourable, they would induce me to open the six volumes." Hill promised that the girls would oblige him in the matter: "They will certainly have sauciness enough to do it, being of late grown borrowing Customers to an Itinerary Bookseller's Shop, that rumbles, once a week, thro' Plaistow in a wheelbarrow, with Chaff enough, of Conscience! and sometimes a weightier Grain."¹⁰⁸ Within a week, Astraea and Minerva sent their joint sentiments:¹⁰⁹

"Having with much ado got over some reluctance, that was bred by a familiar coarseness in the Title, we went thro' the whole six volumes; and found much (masqued) merit, in 'em all; a double merit, both of Head, and Heart. Had there been only that of the last sort, you love it, I am sure, too much to leave a Doubt of your resolving to examine it. . . . The author introduces all his Sections . . . with long runs of bantering Levity, which his good sense may suffer the effect of. It is true, he seems to wear this Lightness, as a grave Head sometimes wears a feather; which tho' he and Fashion may consider as an ornament, Reflection will condemn, as a Disguise and covering. Girls, perhaps, of an untittering Disposition, are improper Judges of what merit there may be in Lightness, when it endeavors rather

¹⁰⁸ July 20, 1749.

¹⁰⁹ July 27, 1749.

at ironie satire than encouragement of Folly. But tell us, Dear Sir, are we in the right, or no, when we presume to own it as our Notion, that however well meant such a Motive may have been, the execution of it must be found distasteful? For we can't help thinking that a mind framed right for Virtue courts and serves her with too much Respect, to join in throwing a Fool's Coat upon her. . . . Meanwhile, it is an honest pleasure, whieh we take in adding, that (exclusive of one wild, detached and independent Story of a Man of the Hill, that neither brings on anything, nor rose from anything that went before it) All the changefull windings of the author's fancy carry on a course of regular design; and end in an extremely moving close, where Lines that seemed to wander and run different ways, meet, All, in an instructive Centre.

“The whole Piece consists of an inventive race of Disappointments and Recoveries. It excites Curiosity, and holds it watchful. It has just and pointed Satire; but it is a partial satire, and confined too narrowly. It sacrifices to Authority and Interest. Its Events reward Sincerity, and punish and expose Hypoerisy; shew pity and benevolence in amiable Lights, and Avarice and Brutality in very despicable ones. In every Part it has Humanity for its Intention; in too many it seems wantoner than it was meant to be: It has bold shocking Pictures; and (I fear) not unresembling ones, in high Life and in low. And (to conclude this too adventurous guess work from a pair of forward baggages) would, everywhere, . . . deserve to please,—if stript of what the Author thought himself most sure to please by.”

An excellent criticism, but not one to please Richardson. He replied that he had been prejudiced by the opinion of judicious friends against the coarse-titled Tom: “I was told, that it was a rambling Collection of waking Dreams, in which Probability was not observed; and that it has a very bad tendency. And I had Reason to think that the Author intended for his second View (his first, to fill his Pocket by accommodating it to the reigning Taste) in writing it, to whiten a vicious Character, and to make

Morality bend to his practises." Why else did he make Tom a "kept Fellow, the lowest of all Fellows," and yet in love with a young creature who was "traipsing after him?" Why such a fond, foolish, insipid heroine? He does not know how to draw a delicate woman—he is not accustomed to their company. He knows the man and dislikes his principles, public and private.¹¹⁰

Reduced to tears by this letter, but not subdued, the two critics permitted their father to answer for them: "Unfortunate *Tom Jones*! how sadly has he mortified Two sawey correspondents of your making! They are with me now, and bid me tell you, you have spoiled 'em both, for criticks. Shall I add, a Secret which they did not bid me tell you? They, both, fairly cried, that *you* should think it possible they could approve of anything, in any Work, that had an *evil tendency*, in any part or purpose of it. They maintain their point so far, however, as to be convinced, they say, that *you* will disapprove this over-rigid Judgment of those Friends, who could not find a thread of moral meaning, in *Tom Jones*, quite independent of the Levities they justly censure. And as soon as you have time to read him, for yourself, 'tis there, pert creatures, they will be bold enough to rest the matter."¹¹¹

Richardson, distressed as he was to have given pain to the ladies, yet insists on their few adverse comments to justify himself: did they not say the merit was masqued? and did they not make other fine reflections on the inadvisability of showing wisdom with a monkey's face? "I imagined, I said, that the censurers of *Tom Jones* were too severe; and why? Because ladies of superior delicacy were so good as to overlook the passages unworthy of their regard, and find a good intention in the rest. . . . I said,

¹¹⁰ August 4, 1749.

¹¹¹ August 11, 1749.

that, knowing the man, I had the more suspicion; for he is a very indelicate, a very impetuous, an unyielding spirited man, and is capable of forming a morality to his practise.” And the ladies said, too, that it had shocking pictures; “could I have imagined, Sir, that I, in following this clue, and in writing freely what those censurers have said, who were disgusted with these faults, and looked upon them in a light too strong, without considering the rest with that candour which your ladies have laudably manifested, for what must *therefore* be praiseworthy in it, or even for expressing my own disgust on several of the passages which I had read, should have written so as to have affected the dear ladies?”¹¹² The ladies must have been very well aware by this time of the nature of their offense.

This marks the close of the correspondence with Hill. He was seriously ill during the greater part of the year, and died on February 8, 1750, “at the instant of the earthquake.”¹¹³ On February 10, Richardson wrote to his friend Skelton:¹¹⁴ “I have just lost my dear and excellent-hearted friend, Mr. Hill, author of *Gideon*. I was present at some of his last scenes; my nerves can witness that I was. I am endeavoring to find opportunities to show my regard to his memory, by my good offices to three excellent

¹¹² August 18, 1749.

¹¹³ *London Magazine*, February, 1750, 56.

¹¹⁴ *Corres.*, V., 199. From the profuse expressions of gratitude in the letters of Hill’s brother and of his daughters Astraea and Urania, Richardson must have carried out his generous intentions, probably helping in the publication of Hill’s works. Urania, “the managing sister of the three,” who inherited her father’s epistolary style more completely than her sisters, kept up a correspondence with Richardson for eight years,—until he criticized for indelicacy a novel she submitted to him. Her hurt rejoinder led him to comment despairingly on the margin of her letter: “I will only say, I truly meant, service, not criticism. Who but the Lady was to see what I wrote?”

daughters, who, for their filial piety, merit all praise, and for their other merits, deserve to be the care of all who know them.’’ Hill’s death occurred the day before a benefit performance of *Merope*, which had been commanded—probably through Mallet’s influence—by the Prince of Wales. There is a touch of irony in the fact that the man who had so generously promoted many benefit performances for his distressed friends should have needed such aid himself in the last days of his life, and should have died before he could receive it. He was buried near his wife, in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

It would be rash to claim that the preceding chapters have dealt with all of Hill's activities; some of them may have left no traces that can be discovered now. There is a hint in a scurrilous attack on the *Prompter* in *Fog's Weekly Journal* (December 7, 1734) that Hill "plied at Cato's elbow, in the South Sea days"; it may mean that he wrote anonymously in the *London Journal* or the *British Journal*, which published Cato's letters against the South Sea Company. If he did, then he was engaged to some extent in political controversy—the one form of activity he seemed to care little about. Once he himself referred to all he had seen in the armies of three nations. Most probably these observations were made during his early tours, though he may have found, before he began to write poetry in London, a few odd months to serve a campaign or two.

The discovery of some new enterprise would arouse no astonishment in one who reflects upon the versatility that had revealed Hill before the age of thirty as traveller, tutor, secretary, poet, translator, historian, dramatist, stage manager, opera librettist, and commercial projector. In some of these rôles he appeared only once. But a projector, in practise and in theory, he remained to the end of his life—the enterprising agent of the York Buildings Company, the dreamer of a Paradise in America, the proprietor of the Plaistow vineyards. A theatrical expert he was always—a keen observer of changing conditions, a student of the art of acting, a caustic critic of the managers, and a dramatist, who won with his translations of Voltaire

a success that had been denied to his original work. He was a poet—so far as his talents permitted him to be—to the last; and in that rôle he came to know and to influence the careers of younger writers; and the most successful of his poems brought him the mixed reward of a gold medal from a Czar and a literary quarrel with Pope. His many acts of kindness were in a manner repaid—not by their recipients, but by the loyal friendship of Richardson. This versatility, and the touch of romantic ardor in his nature, which had sent him off as a boy of fifteen alone to Turkey, explain in some measure the attraction he had for his contemporaries and the esteem in which he was held. His friends saw him engaged in many fields; if some of them were a little uncertain of his eminence in that field which they knew best, they were probably willing to believe him greater in another of which they knew little. When Colonel Horsey recovered from the transports of his first contemplation of Scotch timber, he may have reflected that an imagination, which was not an unmixed blessing to a projector, must be an asset of great value to a poet; and if Savage or Thomson secretly entertained any doubts of their loved Hillarius's poetic supremacy, they could not resist the impression of the coach and six bearing the projector in triumph to Scotland. Praise directed at a man of so many talents must find its mark somewhere.

When, three years after Hill's death, his *Works* were published in four volumes, his reputation was still great enough to attract over fifteen hundred subscribers; but seven years later, only one-fourth that number could be persuaded to subscribe to his *Dramatic Works*. The course of his fame was steadily downward as the impression of his vigorous personality faded away, and only his works were left to speak for him. They spoke very badly. Although, seventy years after his death, selections were still made

from his poetry and his plays for the volumes of the British poets and the British drama, these volumes themselves are now little read. But his name and the record of his activities could not perish so completely as his poems. Those who have written in recent years of Richardson and Fielding, of Pope and Thomson and Savage, have found Hill in their path, not to be ignored; the chronicler of the York Buildings Company owed to him some of his most entertaining pages; the student of the legal aspects of stage history discovered in the *Prompter* the keenest appreciation of the problem of regulation. And none of those who mention him find it possible to be merely perfunctory. They grow cheerful and witty, even in their very exaggeration of his power to bore; or in soberer mood, they express a curiosity about other aspects of his life and character than those they touch upon. They all acknowledge the generosity and kindness of his nature, his humanity and politeness, as Dr. Johnson has it,—a tribute that can be paid without reserve to very few of the greater men of his time.

This reaction of the modern writer is in itself evidence of the interest and vigor of Hill's personality. His faults—his vanity, self-confidence, and extravagance—are obvious enough; they brought their own punishment in leading him to attempt what he could not perform, and to make claims for his work that could have been satisfied only by a transcendent genius. But though he did habitually overestimate the talents and virtues of himself and of his friends, he had flashes of keen insight into character; he had imagination, evident in his projects, if not in his writings; and there is even now and then a gleam of poetry in his verse and his prose. Had his faculties been better balanced, had he been slightly more modest in his own estimation of his talents, he might have attained secure eminence in one of the many

fields of his activity. As it is, one cannot but respect in him qualities admirable in themselves, whether or not they bring success to their possessor,—the tireless energy that cannot endure to rust in idleness, the courage that looks upon failure only as an incentive to further effort. Hill in spirit belongs to the band of those

“Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

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Second edition, with editions [sic]. London, 1710.
Another edition. By A. H. London, 1733.

1710. *Elfrid, or the Fair Inconstant.* A Tragedy, as it is acted at the Theatre Royal by her Majesty's Servants. To which is added, *The Walking Statue, or the Devil in the Wine Cellar.* A Farce. By Mr. Hill. London, 1710.
Another edition of *The Walking Statue.* London, 1780?

1711. *Rinaldo, an Opera, as it is performed at the Queen's Theatre in London.* London, 1711.

1714. *Dedication of the Beech-Tree.* To the most honourable the Earl of Oxford, Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain. Occasioned by the late discovery of making Oil from the fruit of that Tree. By Aaron Hill, Esq. London, 1714.
(Advertised in the *Post Boy*, April 17-20, 1714.)

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By a Society of Gentlemen. For the Universal Benefit of the People of England. Adorned with Four Beautiful Cutts. London, 1718.

(A MS. note in the British Museum copy reads: "The Essays were first publisht under this title: Essays, for the month of December, 1716, to be continued monthly. By a Society of Gentlemen. London, for J. Roberts, 1716.")

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(The dedication is signed by Gilbert Hill, the author of the translation. The preface is by Aaron Hill.)

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(I have not found any fourth edition.)

1720. *The Creation. A Pindaric illustration of a Poem, originally written by Moses, on that Subject. With a preface to Mr. Pope, concerning the sublimity of the Ancient Hebrew Poetry, and a material and obvious Defect in the English.*

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The second edition. London. [1721?]

(The poem is advertised as "this day published," in the *Post Boy*, March 7-9, 1720-1721. The preface in the so-called second edition is dated March 1, 1720-1721. I have not seen a first edition.)

The Fatal Extravagance, a Tragedy, in a manner wholly new: As it is acted at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, with great applause.

(From an advertisement in the *Post Boy*, April 22-25, 1721—"on Thursday will be published." A later advertisement in the same paper for May 2 adds "written by Mr. Mitehel." I have not found this edition.)

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(Advertised in the *Daily Courant*, Dec. 10, 1723.)

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lantry, Marriage, Morality, Mercantile Affairs, Painting, History, Poetry, and Other Branches of Polite Literature. Published originally in the Year 1724, and now first collected into Two Volumes. London, 1730.

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1754. *The Roman Revenge, a Tragedy.* 2nd edition. London, 1754.

1758. *The Insolvent, or Filial Piety, a Tragedy.* London, 1758.

1760. *The Dramatic Works of Aaron Hill, Esq.* In two volumes. London, 1760. Contents: *Life of the Author, Elfrid, Walking Statue, Rinaldo, Fatal Vision, King Henry V, Fatal Extravagance, Merlin in Love, Athelwold, Muses in Mourning, Zara, Snake in the Grass, Alzira, Saul, Daraxes, Merope, Roman Revenge, Insolvent or Filial Piety, Love Letters.*

Most of these plays have been discussed in the text. *The Muses in Mourning* is a short opera, with Apollo, the Muses, and the Geniuses of Spain, France, Holland, and England, as the characters. *Merlin in Love* is a pantomime opera, in which Harlequin and Columbine take part. *Saul* is a tragedy, of which the first act only was completed. *Daraxes* is a pastoral opera, of two acts: Daraxes, an Indian general, invades a peaceful community of shepherds and shepherdesses, in his flight from a Persian foe. “Amorous and gallant scenes” between Daraxes and the shepherdesses are interrupted by the arrival of the Persian soldiers. After much conversation, Daraxes discovers his lost father in the Persian

general. The opera concludes with marriages and a shepherds' dance. It would be interesting to the student of the pastoral to know the date of this effort of Hill's. It may have been written and refused by the managers about the time the first act was printed in the *Prompter* (January 23, 1736).

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S. J. Pratt's *Cabinet of Poetry*, volume 3, London, 1808.

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British Poets, volume 60, Chiswick, 1822.

For Hill's correspondence see also Elwin and Courthope's edition of Pope, volume X, and Mrs. Barbauld's edition of Richardson's *Correspondence*, I, 1-132. The correspondence in the Forster MSS. at the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington is contained in Folio XIII (2), Folio XIV (1), and Folio XV. Hill's letters are chiefly in Folio XIII, and those of Urania Johnson in Folio XIV. The letter from the Hill girls about *Tom Jones* is in Folio XV.

Works ascribed to Hill:

The Works of Lucian, translated from the Greek by several eminent hands. London, 1711. (The eminent hands are Dryden T. Ferne, W. Moyle, Sir H. Sheere, A. Baden, Sprag, *Hill*, S. Atkinson, H. Blount, Ayloffe, J. Philips, L. Eachard, C. Eachard, Savage, J. Digby, Hare, J. Washington, N. Tate, Sir J. Tyrell, C. Blount, T. Brown, J. Drake, S. Cobb, Gildon, Cashem, Vernon. *The Tyrant Killer* (Vol. II, 443-462), and *Dipsas* (Vol. II, 463-469), are by Mr. Hill. The style of these

short prose selections is simple and not at all suggestive of Hill's, though he may possibly be the translator. More probably, the "Mr. Hill" concerned in the *Original Poems* (see *infra*) is the "Mr. Hill" of these translations.)

The Book of Ecclesiastes paraphrased; a divine poem; by A. Hill. Newcastle, 1712. (Ascribed in the catalogue of the Bodleian Library to Aaron Hill. It is the work of a minister—the author declares in the preface that he prefers the character of a preacher to that of a poet. The style is very prosaic, and quite different from that of Hill's paraphrases.)

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